

The top half of the book cover features a dark, textured background. A sword with a silver blade and a dark, possibly blood-stained hilt, is positioned diagonally from the top right towards the center. In the background, a pale, demonic face with dark, hollow eyes and a wide, toothy grin is visible. The Korean title '화생천마' is written in large, bold, black calligraphic characters on the left side. The author's name '장영훈 무협 소설' is written vertically in smaller black characters to the right of the title. The Chinese characters '還生' are written in red calligraphy, overlapping the sword and the author's name.

화생천마

장영훈 무협 소설

還生

REBIRTH OF THE HEAVENLY DEMON

BOOK 01

Jang Young Hun

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

Rebirth of The Heavenly Demon

(환생천마)

by

Jang Young Hun

Synopsis

Chunha Jin, the Mengju of the Murim Alliance and the savior of Kang Ho, was the man who held the title Strongest Under Heaven. His battle against the Demonic Alliance and traitors of the Alliance brought him much fame and glory as well as peace across all of Kang Ho. But one day he suddenly passes out.

Once he opens his eye, he is in a body of a twenty-year-old youth named Byuk Lee Dan. How will the man who once held the title Strongest Under Heaven live this new life? And what will his death entail to all of Kang Ho?

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Book 01

Chapter 1: Rebirth(1)

On that day, the day that became both my last and my first, snow began to fall late in the evening.

Watching the snowflakes fall as gently as feathers, Baek Hyo exclaimed, “Alliance Master! It’s the first snow.”

Baek Hyo was the Alliance’s head of security, and also one of my two trusted aides. Despite being in his forties, his character reflected the innocence of a child. He said, “They say that watching the first snowfall would bring forth a good year.” Even though he tried not to show it, his words had a hint of melancholy for the coming year.

Who knew that the greatest bodyguard, who had once stood up to the combined attack of Black Heaven Palace members and the Seven Evil Monsters, could be this sentimental?

“Yes, it is indeed the first snow!”

Even though I tried to make myself look excited, I honestly wasn’t feeling much inside. Nowadays, even the word ‘first snow’ did not make my heartbeat speed up in the slightest. This year I was already seventy years old. And first snow was not enough to melt my calloused heart. Seeing the snow... I could only remember those who died by my hands in the snowy field. The people who lay on the snow, dying the innocent white snow with crimson red.

Swoosh!. The gentle snowfall began to get more violent.

The heavenly seer who predicted that today would be clear will most likely avoid contact with me for a few days. He predicted that the first snowfall would be in four months.

“That rascal Myung He, must be jumping with joy.”

Myung He was Baek Hyo’s child.

“Is he three years old this year?”

Suddenly, Baek Hyo showed a slightly panicked face.

“He is six this year, sir.”

His reply surprised me. It wasn’t because I could not remember Myung He’s age, but because I remembered having the same conversation couple of days ago. Even then I asked whether his son was three. How could I have made such a mistake? Was I so old that I was turning senile?

“I am sorry, he is that big already.”

Rather than looking disappointed, he looked at me with an anxious face and said, “It’s alright, sir. It is said that you feel the time go by watching other’s child grow.”

Now I am certain that Baek Hyo said the same thing the other

day.

‘Why am I like this these days?’ My memory is not like before, I am getting more and more forgetful. Also, I have trouble remembering my most recent events. My body is not like how it was before either. I don’t have much energy as before and I am spacing out more often. Just to make sure I circulated my ki throughout my body but discovered that there were no abnormalities. ‘Did I catch some sort of a disease? Should I ask the godly doctor to visit?’

But in the end, I decided to wait it out. If rumors started spreading that there was something wrong with the Alliance Master’s health, then the whole Alliance... No, all of Kang Ho would be in chaos.

“Sir, I will excuse myself for today.”

“Go ahead.”

‘Well, my situation is what it is but I felt sorry for Baek Hyo. How could I have made such a mistake twice, and to someone who is so close to me, and who always takes care of me? I must buy his child a pair of clothes. But... was his child a boy or a girl? Shit, I can’t remember.’ Feeling depressed, I turned my sight toward the window. The intense snowfall was slowly painting the world white, along with my memories.

‘ “...is death knocking at my door step?”

For me, the strongest under the heaven? For me, who has held this position for dozens of years?’

In the afternoon, Chancellor Kal Sa Ryan came to the Master’s Pavillion to give the daily report.

As usual, his report contained various things happening in the alliance, but I wasn’t in the mood for it, so I was staring blankly out the window.

Noticing my mood, he ended the report earlier than usual, “...the rest are in the pile, sir.”

“Great Work.”

“Then, I will excuse myself.”

As he was about to leave, I called him back, “Chancellor Kal.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“What kind of person am I?”

“What do you mean by that, sir?”

“Just speak your mind. How do you see me as a person? Go ahead and give me your evaluation.”

I looked at him with an interested look. I was curious to hear how he would evaluate me, since he was one of my oldest allies, and someone who shared my grand ambition of unifying the Central Plains.

“Why, Sir? How could my evaluation be important, sir?”

He replied looking around, “You are the greatest person in Kang Ho.”

The walls of the master’s pavilion had murals displaying my previous deeds.

My fights, which are recorded in the history book of Kang Ho history book.

At twenty-nine I received the title ‘Strongest Under Heaven’. That year, the Blade King, Axe King, and the Fight King, had all knelt down before me.

Before me, the martial god who ruled everything under the heavens. That was the title that I earned at the end of my twenties.

Seven years later when I was thirty-six, I became the youngest Murim Mengju. It was first time in the history of Murim that such a young person had become the Mengju. Being the first in history

filled me with pride.

Drunk with pride and arrogance, I lived my life as Mengju for the last thirty years. I lived an exciting and exhilarating life. Being the Mengju, I lived in the battlefield, defeating the practitioners of the Demonic Alliance and the Evil Sects. In the process, I'd had many close encounters with death, but I had achieved some of the alliance's long lasting wishes. I destroyed two major powers of the Demonic Alliance, The Thirteen Demon Alliance and the Blood Heaven Sect.

But my fights did not end there. After defeating the foreign enemies, the traitors from inside the alliance showed their true colors. They wanted my position and my title, so they poisoned my food and sent assassins. But these were never successful, and I eliminated all those traitors. I had to kill so that I did not get killed.

Some people in Kang Ho called me Iron Blooded Master, others called me Remorseless Master, since I had killed all the traitors without remorse.

Hence, no one would even dare to cough in front me.

“Sir, you are the symbol of the Alliance and Martial arts. Furthermore, you are Kang Ho itself.”

‘Yes, this is who I am. But, why am I feeling so down today?’.

Kal Sa Ryung added with a worrisome expression, “Sir, is there anything bothering you?”

“No, I am all right.”

Kal Sa Ryung left the pavilion after saying, “Then please take care of yourself, sir.”

In the empty hall, I sunk myself deeply into the chair and started pondering, Kang Ho itself. Hahaha as a person of Kang Ho there is nothing more I desire...

“Khhaaa!!!”

After sitting on the chair I lost my breath. I became worried since I started losing strength and couldn't control my body own body.

‘Let's get some rest first...’

I did not know that this would be the last moment of my life. As the Strongest Under the Heaven, I had not expected my death to be like this. I had wanted to die gloriously in battle, surrounded by enemies battling till my last breath!

However, the heaven would not allow that. It seems that my life ends here.

Everything started to become dimmer and dimmer...

Once I opened my eyes, I saw a foreign ceiling.

‘Where am I?’

There was a strong scent of medicine in the room.

‘Is it the doctor’s?’

It seems I must have passed out. I guess I will get an earful from Chancellor Kal for not taking care of myself.

‘What’s this?’

I naturally activated my personal technique, the Heavenly Protection Cultivation Technique. The internal energy from my dantian should have circulated throughout my body to protect me, but. ... why was there no reaction?

‘What is this? Why is it that my dantian which should be full of energy, so empty?’

Was it the energy-suppressing poison? Of course not. My cultivating technique could protect me from everything. It was the undisputed number one cultivation technique. There was no way something as puny such as the energy-suppressing poison would

work on me. This shitty feeling of having an empty dantian and being unable to do anything was worse than having my bones broken and being cut by a blade.

I slowly moved this awkward body.

‘Where am I?’

This was definitely not the master’s pavilion. The size of this room was relatively small. It did not even come close to a tenth of the size of the pavilion.

At that time I heard a sound from the side. “You’re wake?”

I turned my head towards where the sound came from and saw a middle-aged man and a woman. The woman approached me and grabbed my hand, asking me , “Are you alright?”

Of course I was not all right. I did not even know what kind of situation I was in.

I asked, “Who are you?” This was the first time hearing my voice.

The woman replied, “Did you just ask me who I was?”

“Yes.”

“Yes?”

The woman’s face gradually turned ugly, while the men in back quickly advised, “Honey, have some self-control!”

But just as his words had ended, the woman slapped me on the back of my head.

Smack!

“What did you just ask? WHO AM, I? Even if you ask for a thousand apologies I might never forgive you! What did you say? Yes, I will tell you. I, who spent the whole night worrying about you, am your mother! You unfilial son! What did you just say?!”

Swoosh!

Her hand was right in front of my face, but the men in from the back of the room held her hand. If not for him, I would have been slapped in the face.

“Wife, please control yourself. He just woke up after being knocked out. His head must still be muddled!”

“Just die! You wicked wretch!”

Had I been in my original life, I would just laugh at them, saying, ‘look at these fools’. However, currently, I was lost within the

situation.

Ever since being born, this was the first time that I had been smacked in the back of my head. Aside from all that, what kind of situation was I in? I was really confused.

‘Is this a dream?’

But it felt too real for it to be a dream, And the slap really hurt.

I turned my head to look at the mirror on the wall and I was baffled. The one staring back at me was a youth with a blank expression.

‘This is me? Oh, I guess I must really be dreaming.’

The next second I heard a ringing in my head, and my consciousness started to slip away. The women’s rant started to fade away.

Chapter 2: Rebirth(2)

This time when I opened my eyes there was an old man by my side. He was of a pretty small stature with marks all over his face, but his eyes full of energy. This was also someone whom I had never seen before.

‘Oh, my goodness! Am I still dreaming?’

This was the first time experiencing such realistic dreams back to back.

“You should be ashamed of yourself,” said the old man.

‘Well, that’s not what I wanted to know. I wanted to know why I keeping having these weird dreams.’

Then I slowly brought myself up and stared at the mirror that was hanging on the wall. It was the youth from before. This time I observed the face more closely. Aside from all the cuts and bruises, he was a pretty handsome youth and his eyes were full of youthful vigor and playfulness.

He somewhat looked similar to the woman from before. So, that woman was this youth’s mother.

“She was...”

“She?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?”

The old man’s face turned ugly after hearing my words. He must have thought that my words were disrespectful.

‘Is this actually a dream? His stare feels so vivid and real.’

I took my hands out of the blanket and started feeling my body. Everything felt real.

The old man said, “I was really disappointed yesterday.”

“I can’t remember anything.”

I did not know a thing about this youth’s life.

The old man laughed at my answer, “Sounds just like you. You irresponsible rascal...”

I got mad at his words, even though they were meant for this youth.

In my previous life as the Alliance Master I upheld a set of self-

imposed rules. Reward and punish people accordingly and justly. Execute revenge without holding back. Never blame the situation you find yourself in, no matter how difficult circumstances may get. Never doubt the loyalty of your men. And take responsibility for your actions.

I never pushed my responsibilities onto another person. Because I was only human, I could afford to lose a fight and to make mistakes, but I always took responsibility for my actions. This was the code that I lived by.

Seeing my face harden, the old man looked at me with a disdainful look.

“You are a disgrace to your Clan.”

The old man slammed the door shut and left.

‘What kind of incident did this youth cause for me to get this kind of treatment right after opening my eyes?’

Fatigue started to overtake me. I thought that, for sure, if I went to sleep, everything would go back to normal.

I fell asleep again.

I truly believed that once I woke up I would be the Alliance master again. However, when I woke up in the evening I was still that awkward youth. Now I was certain, ‘This is not a dream.’ Yes,

this was definitely not a dream. Even if I had fallen into a deep slumber I would still have been able to distinguish between dream and reality.

Then have I fallen into Qigong Deviation? But no such powerful Qigong Deviation exists in the Kang Ho. If such deviation existed in the Murim world, then I would have been the first to know. 'So, it must not be a Qigong Deviation, and it is definitely not a hallucination either.' So it must mean that I have been reborn into the world as this youth. But I have retained all my past memories. The memories from my previous life as a martial god.

How could this have happened? I had lived in Kang Ho for some seventy years, experiencing many different things, but this was the first. I just blankly stared into the sky wondering how I got here.

Let's just say that I have been reincarnated because I did a hundred good deeds. But how could I have kept all the memories from my past life? And so vividly! Even the memories from my childhood that were buried deep within.

I remember Baek Hyo's joyous face when his son had been born. His grinning face. Even the wrinkles in his smile. I could remember everything so clearly now, but how was it possible that back then I could not even remember whether his child was a son or a daughter...?

Now that I thought about it, this was not something that should have happened. At the time of my death my head was muddy, as if consumed by some sort of a poison. In other words, it could have meant that my death was brought about by unnatural causes.

So had I been poisoned?

Did this mean that the heavens had granted me a new chance in order to seek revenge? ...If not so, then...?

I sat on the balcony as I gazed at the setting sun, pondering the reasons why I was here. With a weird face, a weird body, in a weird place, with weird people. Everything was weird.

I wished for everything to return to normal when I opened my eyes. I wanted to once again see Chancellor Kal come through the door to bring me another mountain-load of work.

Suddenly, someone opened the door and walked in. This time it was a male youth in his mid-twenties. He asked, “Oh? You’re awake, sir?”

Couple of people had already visited my room, but this was the first time that someone had announced themselves before approaching me. The youth came to my side and took a seat next to me. He said, “What did I tell you, young master! I told you that you couldn’t win against her! She’s been training under a famed master for many years! Please listen to what I have to say, young master. I was worried sick that something might have happened to you when I was carrying you back home...”

“Who are you?”

“Yes, I heard, young master. You are pretending that you’ve lost your memories. Even though no one believes you, your acting skill is top notch. If not, you would have been beaten to death by Madame. When it comes to things like this, you are really good at using your head. But why did you act without thinking the other day... No, never mind. I know that you’re very ignorant.”

“Let me ask you again. Who are you?”

“Young master, please use this experience to practice martial arts properly. Isn’t it shameful to walk around after being beaten by a girl?”

“I’m going to ask one last ...”

“Kwang Du, my name is Kwang Du. Very funny young master... Now stop pretending that you’ve lost your memory.”

“Kwang Du? Crazy Head?”

“If you already know the answer then why are you asking me?”

“Really? You really have ‘crazy’ in your name?” I looked at him with a strange face.

He realized at this time that something was wrong.

“Of course not. My name means ‘light’, not ‘crazy’. You’ve

always called me crazy-head to tease me, young master. But why are you like this today?”

“Honestly, I truly don’t remember anything.”

“Young master, it’s not even funny anymore.”

“I am telling the truth.”

“Really?!”

He looked at me with a strange face, questioning me, “A couple of days ago, do you remember that money I lent you?”

“How much did you lend me?”

“Two nyang.”

I went straight for my pocket, digging out two nyang as if I could not live with that debt.

Seeing me reach for my pocket, Kwang Du looked at me with wide eyes and said in a surprised tone, “Oh my god! It seems that you really don’t remember anything!”

“Why?”

“Because, young master, you are a person who has never repaid his debts. What happened to you? Did she really hit you that hard on the head?”

“I think so.”

“What did Elder Jong say?”

“Who is that? The old man from before?”

“What? Even fools fear Elder Jong. It seems that you really can’t remember.”

“Just answer my questions. I might start remembering things if you tell me. Who is that old man?”

“He is the clan’s head doctor and financial officer. He is also the martial brother of the Gaju-nim.”

“The Gaju? You mean my father?”

“...Why are you acting like this? I am starting to get scared, young master.”

“Martial Brother? He seems way older than my father.”

“For martial artists, why should age matter.”

“Who said that?”

“Young master, don’t they say [Sae Hae Dong Do](#)?”

(Translator Note: Sae Hae Dong Do means to go through the sea of death with your brother. So in other words you can do anything for your martial brother.)

Sae Hae Dong Do. This was a familiar phrase. It was a very common phrase used in Kang Ho. There was no other place that questioned everything like Kang Ho. They questioned your age, your sect, your skills, your gender, whether you were a junior or a senior, based you on your origins, whether you specialized in attack or defense, saber or fist, whether you were left-handed or right-handed, an internal practitioner or an external practitioner, etc.

Kwang Du asked me, “What did he say when you told him you didn’t remember anything?”

“He didn’t believe me.”

“Well that was somewhat expected.”

“That old man had a very sour look on his face, what did I do?”

“Where should I start, young master...”

It seemed that this was not the first time this youth had gotten into trouble.

“Let’s start with the most recent events. How did I get injured like this?”

Kwang Du stared at me with a lame face and took a deep sigh, “You went out to see Lady Song, but got rejected. Then you got drunk and got angry and caused a ruckus at their house. Then Lady Song came out and beat the living daylights out of you...Ha.”

“Who is Lady Song?”

“Her name is Song Hwa Rin. She is the scioness of the Song Family. She is the number one beauty on this mountain. She is both smart and very gifted in martial arts. She is perfect in every aspect, except for one thing.”

“What’s that?”

“She is your fiancé.”

“What?”

“The two of you were engaged before you were even born.”

There were two reasons why such an engagement would occur. One - because the parents were really close, or two - for political

reasons.

“The husband is really lame and has terrible luck.”

“Do I hit you often?”

“Ahh, No. Why are you asking such a question, young master?”

“Because my hands are getting pretty itchy after hearing what you said.”

Kwang Du replied with a slick smile, “HAHAH, young master, our relationship is even closer than that of brothers.”

‘It certainly doesn’t seem that way’

Anyway, I had no way of knowing what kind of relationship this youth had with Kwang Du.

“Why did I get beaten that badly? If we were engaged even before birth, we should have had a fairly close relationship.”

“Yes, when you were younger. You two often played together. But five years ago the young miss went to the Blue Sea to train in martial arts. It has only been a couple of days since her return.”

“Did she have a change of heart?”

“No, it was you who changed, young master.” Kwang Du took a deep sigh.

“And what kind of trouble did I cause before that?”

“You lost tons of money by getting scammed while gambling. You lost even more money with prostitutes. Got into fights after getting drunk. Left the house saying that you wouldn’t practice martial arts...”

“Let’s stop there.”

I did not have to hear the rest to know how this youth had lived.

“But why did my mother only slap me once before calling it a day?”

‘If I had a child like this, I would have beaten him to half death.’

“In one word, could you describe what kind of person I am?”

“Can I tell you the truth, young master?”

“I am giving you this one opportunity.”

“You are scum.”

I remembered how the day that I died Chancellor Kal answered the same question. He said I was ‘Kang Ho itself’. In less than a day, I went from being the hero of Kang Ho to being no better than trash.

After saying that, Kwang Du took a few steps back said in a quiet voice, “I guess he really must have come back from death.”

Well, he is half correct. I really died and came back.

Chapter 3: Rebirth(3)

The youth whom I had reincarnated into was named Byuk Lee Dan. And the place where I had reincarnated was called Kok Bu. It was part of the San Dong City, which was one of the border city of the Central Plains. Our clan was called the Great Saber Byuk Clan, and it was one of the great clans of San Dong City.

This youth's father was Byuk Do Jun, and his mother was Im Ae Hwa. In contrast to the violent mother, the father was a calm, quiet and collected person. The reason why this youth was so spoiled was because he was their only child.

For the first few days I was hoping that everything would go back to normal after waking up. However, that did not happen, so I finally decided to accept the situation that I was in. Being reborn as this youth was not all that bad. By the time of my death, I was already seventy years old. I had lived my life to its fullest before dying. So, giving up my title as the Mengju for youth was a pretty good trade. Youth was something that one could not buy with money or power. But... it really would have been better if this youth had been raised properly.

This youth had a terrible personality, but his martial arts were even worse. Despite being a descendent of a martial arts family, the energy that he had accumulated into his dantian for over twenty years was no more than five years' worth of energy. His body was so weak that it could even snap after being hit a few times. That's how much of a trash this youth was.

But at least he had a somewhat reliable servant who listened to

his every command.

“Young master, have you heard the rumors?”

“What rumors?”

“The rumors about the previous grandmasters making an appearance, the appearance of mystical creatures... and the death of the Murim Mengju.”

It has been a few days since my death so I expected the announcement of my death, but it was awfully quiet. But of course, this place was near the border, so it would take time for news to reach here. Or maybe the alliance was withholding the announcement of my death. The passing of the alliance master would cause a great ruckus everywhere. Even so, they really could not hide my death for too long. I guess Chancellor Kal would do something about it.

“And there is a rumor about you, young master.”

“What kind of rumor?”

“The rumor that you got beaten up by Lady Song so bad that you became a little weird in the head.”

I burst into laughter. I guess it had been a while since I last laughed. In my previous life, I was someone who rarely laughed. Or maybe the position that I was in had forced me to stop laughing,

because laughing could have been seen as a sign of weakness.

“Is Lady Song really that beautiful?”

“Yes, she was very beautiful even when she was little. But when she returned from her training she received the title number one beauty of San Dong. Because of this, people were lining up catch just a glimpse of her. Well, you got excited because of the rumors and went to see her. And when we saw her that day, she was breathtakingly beautiful.”

Female, and a real beauty at that.

In my previous life, I had met and interacted with many females. I was pretty famous, so I had many women chasing after me. Among them were the Strongest Woman Under the Heaven and the Number One Beauty of Kang Ho. But I knew I had never felt true love from any of them. I had become too famous too early. They did not only think of me as a man, but as a martial god. They were all putting on fake smiles, but in the end they were afraid of me. If there were ones who were not afraid of me, then they or their parents would try to use me for their power struggles. I got rid of not just them, but three entire generations of their family. I had not had time to court anyone because of my long fights against the practitioners of the Demon Alliance and the traitors of the Alliance. I truly did not have time; all I did was eat and fight.

“Even after getting beaten up by Lady Song, you still want to meet her, right? I understand your feelings young master, hehe.”

“It’s alright.”

“What’s alright, young master?”

“She is all right.”

“Oh, my! Are you complimenting Lady Song right now? She’s not just any women, it’s Lady Song. The number one beauty of San Dong. The beauty who tried to kill you just because you went to see her...”

“Yeah, yeah, alright, alright. Go get me a sword.”

“What? A Sword? Why so sudden, young master?”

‘The sword is my true lover.’

“Why do you ask? As a martial artist, must there be a reason for me to ask for a sword?”

“Sword? Martial Artist? These are words that don’t describe who you are, young master!”

“For disobedience, the young master accidentally killed his servant. How is that? How do these words describe me?”

“I’ll bring the sword right away, young master.” Kwang Du took

off running, touching his neck.

After some time, Kwang Du brought back a sword.

“I was looking for it for a while, young master. It was buried deep somewhere in the storage.”

After holding the sword my heart calmed down. I was someone who had once been called a martial god, a master of many arts and techniques, but if someone were to ask me to pick my best art, it would be my sword arts. In my later years, my sword stood at the apex of the sword arts. My sword moved at the speed of light, striking at the heart of my enemies. But what I wanted to achieve was even beyond that.

The the Spirit-Sword State.

At this point the martial artist did not even need a physical sword. It is said that the ones who reached this state could freely use an invisible sword created from the heart. There was nothing in the world that the Spirit-Sword could not cut. The more one strengthened the heart, the stronger the Spirit-Sword would become. I wanted to achieve this state in my previous life. However, in the end I did not manage to and was eventually reborn into this life. Thus, this life's goal would be to reach new heights and to go on paths which I had never been able to tread in my previous life.

However, there was a big hurdle in front of me. With a body like this, how could I possibly reach a state that I could not previously

achieve, even as a martial god?

Shiiiiing~

Slowly, I drew my sword.

“It seems like a pretty good sword.”

The blade seemed to be rusty due to it having been locked in a storage for a long time.

“Of course, young master, the Gaju-nim gifted this to you on your fifteenth birthday.”

“I must have been a real fool, letting this sword rust to this degree.”

“It’s good that you know.”

I pointed the sword at him.

“It’s just a phrase, it’s just a phrase, young master.”

“Haha!”

Don’t worry, you fool, this is the first time after being reborn that I feel so clear-headed. It’s probably because I am holding a

sword.

‘Now that I think about it, when was the last time I drew a sword?’

After destroying the Thirteen Demon Alliance and the Blood Heaven Sect, and after taking care of all the traitors from the alliance, I only drew my sword to train. But after realizing the sad truth, that I couldn’t achieve the Heart-Sword State, I never touched a sword again.

After seeing the blade, I regained my composure. ‘In this life, I will achieve it’.

There were many things needed in order to reach the peak. Natural talent, sudden insight, tireless effort, and ample experience. In my previous life I had everything. I had natural talent, gave all of my effort, had sudden insights, and had plenty of battle experiences. As a result of that, I was able to become the martial god.

However, I needed something else to reach the Heart-Sword state. And that was Luck. It was only when the heaven allowed it that one would get a sudden insight to reach that state. In this life, I would challenge the heavens once more, and reach the state of the Heart-Sword. Unless I tried, I would never know whether I had the luck to achieve it.

“Go get the whetstone.”

“The whetstone? Do you want to break my head with it?”

“I’m going to sharpen my sword.”

“Who are you trying to kill?”

I gave him a stare and started to move, saying, “Don’t play around with me.”

“Why do you think I’m playing around? Don’t they usually say lunatics kill the ones who are closest to them first?”

“How do you know that?”

How do you think I know? These were the most frequent cases in my previous life. I saw so many cases where the lunatics killed their families before doing something crazy.

“Did you just say that I was the closest one to you?”

“Did I say that?”

Kwang Du looked at me with a weird expression.

“Let’s just say that you are the person nearest to me.”

Kwang Du scratched his head and replied, “That’s even more

weird.”

After some time, Kwang Du brought back a whetstone, and I started grinding the sword.

Grind... Grind... Grind...

He was staring at me with a tilted head. “You’re really good at this. Where did you learn it from, young master?”

The blade was practically my life, so of course I would be good. No. Not just good. You could practically say that I was even better at sharpening the blade than most blacksmiths.

“If you are so good at sharpening the sword, why have you never done it before?”

“Because there is a time for everything.”

“Are you really alright young master? You seem to be a different person...”

I stopped sharpening my sword and looked at him. He had a worried expression. This was the same face that Baek Hyo had on the night that I died. This was the true expression of being worried about others.

“I’m all right.” And I started sharpening my sword again.

Grind... Grind... Grind...

In my previous life, it did not matter what type of sword I used. Be it a stick from the ground or a blade from a master artisan, the result would have been the same. No, I did not even need a sword. I could use my fist, or even take the enemy's blade. But this was a crucial time for me. I needed a very good blade to protect myself because currently, I was so weak that I could easily be killed for no reason.

Kwang Du cautiously looked at me.

“You are not thinking of taking revenge on Lady Song, are you? You can't do that!”

At that moment, someone from behind Kwang Du said, “Really, is that the reason behind your recent actions?”

I looked back and saw my mother standing behind me.

Kwang Du quickly greeted my mother and moved to the side, “Welcome, Mistress.”

And my mother approached me.

“I. asked. you. Are you sharpening your blade to hurt Hwa Rin-ee?”

“No, that is not my reason.”

“Then why are you sharpening your blade?”

This was probably the first time that my mother saw me sharpening my blade, so she was just as surprised as Kwang Du.

“Starting now, I am going to truly practice martial arts.”

My mother and Kwang Du had their mouths open, surprised looks on their faces.

“Kwang Du-ya, what did he just say?”

“He said he was going to practice martial arts, mistress.”

“He must be crazy, right?”

“Yes, I think so, mistress. I think we need to call an exorcist to chase away this evil spirit.”

How much did this youth hate martial arts, that they give this sort of reaction when I said I wanted to practice martial arts?

Mother said with a sigh, “You really want to take revenge on Hwa Ryun...”

Hidden within the fierceness of my mother's eyes were the true nature of her feelings. The feeling that all mothers have. The feeling of caring for their child.

In my previous life I had never reared a child, so I would never understand her feelings. In my seventy years of life all I cultivated was my martial arts and my wrinkles. Half of it was because I could not find my true love, while the other was because I was too busy fighting for the Alliance.

I could feel the true feelings that she had for her child. How she would sacrifice her life for her child.

“Can you take a look at this blade for me?”

I gave her the sharpened sword for her to see. When she turned her sight toward the sword she was surprised to see it sharpened so well.

“I don't know what I will do with this blade.”

She quickly turned her attention towards me.

“But I will never use this blade to hurt my fiancé. I will never use this blade to harm those who are weaker than me. I swear this to you as your son.”

She was moved, as this was the first time she heard something like this from her son.

Truth be told, I felt sorry for her because I was not her son. But I could not tell her that I was not her son, because sometimes ignorance was a bliss. If I told her the truth, the result would not be very good, since her son was gone, and now only existed in the flesh. So I decided to never tell her and take it to the grave with me. I would be her son until the day I died.

She returned the blade to me.

“Don’t worry, mother.”

Afterwards, I excused myself. I could sense that she was staring at me while I was leaving, pondering on how to accept the change in her son’s attitude.

Chapter 4: Number One In San Dong City(1)

Two days had passed since I had reincarnated into this life, but there was still no news of my death from the alliance. Over the past two days, I had gotten more accustomed to my current lifestyle while Kwang Du taught me different things about the clan. He told me about the different people, their personalities, as well as the customs of the clan. I was able to retain everything he told me after hearing it only once, due to how good my memory had become.

The only thing that I could not get accustomed to was myself. To be more precise, my body. Going from being the Strongest Under the Heaven to being trash was a very tough transition. It was like going from riding on the [red hare](#) to riding on a turtle.

(Translator Note: Red Hare is a legendary horse that was said to travel 1,000 li a day. Able to cross the river and climb mountain as if it was on a flat surface.)

I left the house and climbed the closest mountain to train my body. The mountain pass that I crossed was covered in snow. Even though I was wearing fur clothes I could still sense the coldness to my bones.

As I got to the top I nearly fell a couple of times. This was something that I could not even think of in my previous life. 'I wonder how many more times I will say this.'

On the top of the mountain there was a cave big enough to fit two or three people. As I entered the cave, I sat myself down in the lotus position. The energy inside of my dantian was only worth

five years of accumulation, but it was the worst of the worst type of energy. Luckily, the cultivation technique that I had mastered in my previous life was considered the best cultivation technique in all of Kang Ho. I was confident that I could convert all of the energy in my dantian to the purest form of energy. So, I started circulating my Heavenly Protection Cultivating Technique. After circulating it for a few breaths' worth of time, I realized how sturdy my profound veins were.

Wuuu!

The Heavenly Protection Technique was like a river that had been held back by a dam. After a few breaths, the dam could not hold on any longer and exploded, cleaning out all of the impurities in the body.

As I cycled the energy through my profound vein one, twice, ... all the way up to seven times, all of my internal energy transformed into pure energy.

Even though this breakthrough was fast, it was not something that was easily achieved. Only I was able to achieve this sort of result in such a short amount of time, because of all the experience that I had accumulated as a martial god. The energy that I had in my dantian was actually five years' worth of pure energy rather than impure energy. This paled in comparison to my previous life, which had over two hundred years' worth of cultivation. But, at least, now I could freely use my energy.

Now it was time for me to increase my energy. This was the easy part, because I had completely mastered my Heavenly Protection

Cultivation Technique. I could cultivate nonstop, whether it be eating, walking or training. Also, I could cultivate three times as much energy than any ordinary cultivator. By opening both the twelve principal meridians and the eight extraordinary meridians I could raise the rate by five times. By shedding the mortal body, the effect would increase by ten times.

All that was left of me was to strengthen my dantian, so I was planning on cultivating with my divine technique until I fell asleep. The next thing I had to do was to train the body. Even though martial arts used internal energies as the basis, the body was the most important. The body served as the main instrument for the martial artist, so a stronger body meant stronger martial arts.

When I arrived back at my house, Kwang Du rushed over to me as if he had something important to say.

“Young master, big trouble.”

I originally thought that the news about my death had finally come.

However, it was something entirely different.

“Master Song came over.”

“Who is that?”

“It is Lady Song’s father, Lord Song Woo Kyung.”

“So what if he came, why are you causing a scene?”

“Because Lady Song came as well.”

Song Hwa Rin was my fiancé, and the Number One Beauty of San Dong City. She was also the one who had tried to kill me a couple of days ago.

It was someone who would make Kwang Du make a scene. But my heart was serene.

“They are waiting for you, young master. Where have you been all this time?”

“Why are they looking for me?”

“Why? To get an apology from you.”

“The ones who should apologize should be that side. She almost beat me to death.”

“Well, you were the one who started this whole thing, but this is not the time to be arguing with me. Let’s hurry up and go.”

Kwang Du dragged me to the guest pavilion.

When I arrived at the guest pavilion, all the side chatter died out, and everyone was staring at me.

My sight naturally turned toward her, because there was something that made me feel naturally inclined toward her. It was her beauty. The power of her beauty was absolutely domineering. Bright and deep eyes, perfect symmetrical and white face. Plump breasts, well defined waist, and long slender legs.

If this was everything that she had, she would not be called the Number One Beauty San Dong City. She was graceful, yet platonic. She looked pure and innocent, yet deeply profound. She was very contradictory and very beautiful.

Kwang Du was wrong. She was not just the Number One Beauty of the City, but she could have competed to even be the Number One Beauty of all the Central Plains. I could have vouched for her beauty, because I had already met the Number One Beauty in all of the Central Plains. She was more beautiful than any other woman that I had ever met in my life.

Song Hwa Rin was a person who had an aura which made everything around her become a background created just for her. My sight slowly turned toward Song Woo Kyung. Compared to his daughter, he was pretty handsome. No, he was rather scary.

I greeted him, "It has been a while. Have you been well?"

"Yes, I have been well."

Compared to his scary face, he gave a rather prepossessing answer.

After my greeting I looked back at Song Hwa Rin, but she gave me look full of contempt. I did not know how bad of a person this youth was, but this time I was able to relate to this youth. Of course one would go crazy seeing a beauty like that. On top of him being a youth in his twenties, full of life, vigor and arrogance, he also wanted to show off in front of all those people who had come to catch a glance, showcasing that she was his fiancé.

“I apologise for that day.”

Song Hwa Rin nodded once after receiving my apologies, but she stayed silent.

I understood her attitude and her feelings, and how she must have felt hearing all the rumors about me for the past five years, while she was training. We might have been close when we were young, but that was now a thing of the past.

I did not want to stay any longer, so I turned around, ready to leave.

She shouted in a light and clear voice, “Wait!”

After grabbing my attention, she continued, “Now that we are all here, I have something to say.”

“What is it?”

After hesitating for a second she said in a calm voice, “Could you cancel this engagement?”

Everyone was shocked, as if they had all been struck by lightning.

The first one to recover was Song Woo Kyung.

“What do you mean by that?”

“I know that it is something that I should not have said, but please allow me to choose my own husband.”

Hearing her say that, my parents’ expressions became very serious. They were not expecting this. They were not expecting that Song Hwa Rin would want to cancel the engagement. But they could not say anything either, because, looking at their son, they fully understood her.

Song Wu Kyung criticized his daughter with an angry expression, “Hurry up and apologize to them!”

But she was unwavering. “I am really sorry. Since I was young you have considered me your own daughter; however, I do not plan on marrying Sir Byuk. I am really sorry.”

She bowed one more time. Mother and father were standing there, dazed.

Song Wu Kyung said in an angry tone, “What a rude thing to say!”

This time, I also said something, “Can I say something.”

Everyone’s eyes were on me.

“I also want to cancel this engagement.”

Hearing what I had just said, everyone was surprised. They all understood why Song Hwa Rin wanted to cancel our engagement. But they had no idea why I wanted to cancel our engagement.

My mother finally said something.

“What do you mean by that?”

My mother was feeling embarrassed. Even though she felt sorry for Song Hwa Rin, she really wanted to see us married.

“I also want to choose the person that I want to marry.”

After hearing that, Song Hwa Rin’s face grew cold. It was because she took it as the one that I wanted to marry being not her, but

someone else.

If my in-laws were not present, my mother would have immediately started saying, ‘You stupid fool! Are you out of your mind?’ with her fist flying at me. But at this moment she was just embarrassed and dazed.

Finally, my father intervened.

“If those are your wishes, then let’s do it.”

Then Song Wu Kyung raised his voice.

“You can’t do that. I cannot allow the cancellation of this engagement.”

My father replied, “Hwa Rin is right. We cannot decide their future for them.”

“I will not allow it! We will leave for today. Let’s go!”

Song Wu Kyung could not reign in his anger towards his daughter. He left in a sour mood.

“Why aren’t you following me?”

Song Hwa Rin left and went to her father’s side after saying her

farewell.

When she got to my side she stopped and questioned me.

“Why did your heart change?”

Seeing her this close, she was even more beautiful and she had a very sweet scent.

“Let’s just say your fist was very eye-opening.”

After nodding, she hastened her pace and disappeared behind the door.

My mother looked at me and said, “We need to talk.”

My mother wanted to convince me no matter what.

“I really want you to marry Hwa Rin. Even though your father agreed to cancel your engagement, I know he truly didn’t mean it.”

My father gave me a nod, agreeing with her.

“She is someone that it too good to pass.”

“I am sorry, mother. But I don’t plan on marrying. Currently, I

have something that I must do.”

“If you don’t feel like marrying her, then why did you go to their house and cause a ruckus.?”

“I am sorry.”

I had nothing to say about that, but I had something to say.

“It is said before marriage one has his eyes wide opened, after marriage one closes his eyes.”

Actually this was something that I had told Baek Hyo before his marriage.

“Right now, my eyes are opened wider than ever.”

Confirming that I wanted to go through with it, they both wore frustrated expressions. With a big sigh, my mother said, “What is it that you are currently trying to achieve?”

“Training my martial arts.”

“Is that your true feeling?”

“It is.”

After blankly staring at me for a bit she slowly came to me and wrapped her hands around my face. I could feel her warmth.

“You are not going to do anything stupid, right?”

“Yes.”

After witnessing our conversation, my father told my mother, “Let’s go.”

“Go where?”

“It’s been a while. Let’s have a drink.”

Understanding my father’s intent, she let go of my face.

“I will not allow it. Let’s discuss about this later.”

“Yes, mother.”

The two of them left the room.

Looking out the window I could see their silhouettes. They looked very lovely and happy walking side by side. In my heart, I knew that family made a martial artist weak.

Because the family can become hostages? No that’s not what I

meant. I was worried that if I understood the feeling of love, I would grow weaker. Because in my previous life, I had watched all true love end up that way.

Chapter 5: Number One In San Dong City(2)

I got up early next morning to begin my training. The first thing I had to do was to train the body. After running about five li, I was out of breath, my legs were shaking, and my head was spinning. It seemed that this was the limit of my physical capability. I wanted to use my internal energy, but I did not do so. Only by overcoming this hurdle could I truly raise my physical abilities.

Sprinting, jogging, sprinting. After repeating this process for ten li I dropped dead to the ground, trying to catch my breath. The sweat and chill on my back told me the sad truth about this body. But I did not think too much about it, only thinking how I could transform this body and how it would look after training.

After catching my breath, I took off running again and repeated this process until I could not move anymore. Then I dragged myself home after training.

In front of my house there was someone who I was not expecting to see. It was Song Hwa Rin. Although she was quite far away I knew that it was her right away. With a mere set of martial arts clothes her aura had changed drastically from the previous day. Also, because of her good looks, any type of clothes suited her.

If she were wearing a dress that showed her delicate body rather than a martial artist robe, I was sure she would have made all the women green with envy.

“Don’t get the wrong idea. I did not come here because I wanted

to. My father sent me to apologize.”

It seems that she was waiting for me, after having apologized to my mother and father.

“Don’t worry, I won’t.”

She gave me a sour look. ‘What do you have that makes you this proud?’ was the look that she had.

“That day you were drunk, right? You said let’s see how long this look can last. How long my looks could last until I got old and wrinkly, right? So don’t be so proud you said that!”

‘Byuk Lee Dan, you are truly a little devil.’ It had happened on the day that I could not remember.

“Let me apologize for that day again.”

“No, you are right. Right now, everyone might compliment me on my looks. But when I get old no one will even look at me. It’s the obvious.”

She was calm and clearly understood on the situation that she was in.

“Every time I hear how beautiful I am reminded of my future. So, I want to be known not for my appearance, but for my ability. To

do this I need to put in more work, right? Yeah, let me tell you the truth. The reason why I wanted to cancel our engagement was because I do not like a person like you. You come from a great clan and cause trouble every day. But even if you were a great person, it would have been the same. Right now, I do not have the thought of meeting any men.”

She was truly fierce. Her fierceness came from her heart. She really wanted to be successful through her abilities. I had thought she was just a little girl with a pretty face, but now I realized how deep and profound her thoughts were, actually.

“Alright, I understand your thoughts.”

As I was about to step away, it seemed that there was something in her mind.

“I heard the rumors about you.”

“What rumor?”

“How you have changed since that day.”

“Yeah. I think I have grown up after getting beaten up by you.”

“It is said a human being does not change that easily.”

I nodded in agreement with her. She was right. It was truly hard

to change a person. It was something I had experienced many times in my previous life. But I had also experienced the opposite.

“However, humans are also the ones that change the fastest.”

“Is this all because of your pride?”

“You can think whatever you want.”

Ah, yes. These are the feelings people in their twenties experience. Because of pride, people met and broke up. Because of pride, they smiled and cried.

Now that I thought about it, when I was in my twenties I was truly lively. The times when I had gone to the Central Plains with a single sword to challenge the practitioner of the Demon Alliance... My springtime of youth, and the times when everything was exciting and lively.

“In the future, I will not be in your way.”

Saying that, she left.

Ten days had passed since I had started training. During these ten days, there was still no news regarding my death. Thus, I decided not to pay attention to it. Even if I paid attention to it, there was nothing I could do. So I decided to put all my attention on my training.

After days of intense training I could tell that changes were occurring in my body. I went from being out of breath after 5 li to being able to run 10 li with ease. Not only my distance, but my speed had also increased.

I realized after a couple days' worth of training that this youth was a natural talent. This was also the reason for his sturdy profound veins. Even though it might be very late to start walking the path of martial arts, it did not matter to me. All that mattered to me now was to train this body as fast as possible. While training the body, I started training in the sword arts.

Shinng! I quickly slashed the empty space.

While my body might be trash, I was still me, the one who held the title of 'Strongest Under the Heavens'. After slashing the air a couple of times, my sword light appeared. Even though my sword light was dim due to my lack of energy, it was still full of my sword intent. My sword looked simple, but it was not. It was deeply profound, to the point where my opponent could not even react to it. Only I knew the sword's final destination. This sword art was my personal self-created sword art.

If someone who knew this youth saw me practice, they would fall into shock, but on this desolate mountain there was not even a snow deer in sight. I needed to be careful and to practice in secret. Not because I was weak, but because of something I had learned in my past life. By hiding my abilities, I had the opportunity to use them against people who were stronger than me.

I could never forget that I was no longer the Strongest Under Heaven, but this youth now.

The sword art that I practiced was called Ashura Soul-Chasing Sword Art(追魂修羅劍法). It was with this sword art that I had gained my status as the Strongest Under Heaven. With this sword art, I had pierced at the heart of the Thirteen Demon Alliance, and slashed at the throat of the Blood Heaven Sect.

One day, the Teacher of the Thousand Ways (萬通先生), who was considered the greatest scholar of Kang Ho, commented that my sword art was the greatest technique in the past hundred years. There were many strict criteria when evaluating others' techniques. So my sword art was something that I was proud of.

My Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art was divided into Six Techniques - three sword Techniques and three oppressive techniques.

The First Technique was called Unwavering Sword Technique.

The Second Technique was called Life-Devoting Sword Technique .

The Third Technique was called Nothingness Sword Technique.

The Fourth Technique was called Soul-Escaping Oppressive Technique.

The Fifth Technique was called Samsara Oppressive Technique.

The Sixth technique was called [The Nirvana Oppressive Technique](#).

(Translator Note: A lot of these have reference to Buddhism. As you start practicing Buddhism you must have an Unwavering heart and Devote you whole life to it. Once you devote everything you have, you might reach the nothingness or the enlightenment stage, where your soul can escape from the cycle of samsara and reach nirvana, or promise land.)

Currently, I could use the first three techniques. Even though they were relatively weak compared to before, I could still use them. But the last three stances could only be used after achieving certain stages in the internal energy. The fourth stance could be gained after obtaining sixty years' worth of energy. The fifth stance could be achieved after one hundred twenty years' worth. And the Sixth stance after one hundred eighty years' worth.

The final stance consumed considerable amount of energy and it was quite difficult to execute. Even the slightest mistake could bring heavy backlash upon the user. At worst, it could even kill the user.

Even I had only used this technique once. And that was to kill the Alliance Leader of the Thirteen Demon Alliance. Although I could use the first three stances, I still had to conceal it in public. Despite the fact that most people would not be able to recognize this sword art, there could be someone in the Kang Ho who would recognize it. So, I decided that until I became stronger, it was never a bad thing to be extra cautious.

After finishing my training, I looked down the mountain. Even though it was only five years' worth of cultivation, it was the first time in awhile that I felt this lively and full of energy. It was power of youth, giving me all this energy.

“Haaaa!”

After yelling out loud I felt even more refreshed.

“Hey, why have you lived like a trash when you had a body like this? I think it must have been the heavens' will that allowed me to come into this body. It is not just a gift for me, but for this youth too. ‘I will make this new life dazzling.’

“Miss, what are you thinking so hard about?”

Hearing someone ask her a question, Song Hwa Rin came back to her senses.

It was her bodyguard, Soo Ran.

“Oh, it is nothing.”

Song Hwa Ring brought down the cup that she was about to drink from. But the tea had already become cold. In her mind, she was thinking about Byuk Lee Dan.

“Humans are also the ones that change the fastest.”

He seemed to be a completely different person than when he had caused the ruckus. She was nodding slowly.

“He is someone who leeches off his parents.”

Soo Ran had an inkling about who her master was thinking about.

“Young master Byuk is said to be training martial arts in the mountain.”

“Training martial arts?”

“Yes, it was something that has never happened, so everyone in the Byuk clan is shocked.”

“How come he is practicing right now? Isn't it a bit late?”

“I think he just wants to look good in front of you, my lady.”

Song Hwa Rin was thinking of Byuk Dan Lee's most recent attitude.

“It did not seem like he wanted to look good in front me.”

“Of course not. He is a male. All that he wants to do is look good in front of you.”

Song Hwa Rin’s face started to turn red.

Soo Ran apologized quickly, “I am sorry my lady, I was speaking without thinking.”

Knowing that Soo Ran had an easygoing personality, Song Hwa Rin did not punish her.

“People have different tastes in this sort of thing.”

“But that doesn’t include you, my lady.”

She knew that this conversation was going to go nowhere, so she just smiled.

“My lady, you know that there is a meeting with all the future heads?”

“Must I participate?”

“Yes, you must. Young master Yang of the Yang clan asked many times for your participation. You know the Yang Clan...”

“All right, all right. I will go, okay?”

“I am sorry. I will start preparing.”

As Soo Ran was about to leave the room Song Hwa Rin asked her, “Do people change that easily?”

“Not easily, but I do believe that people change.”

“Why do you think so?”

“Because, my lady, you have changed a lot as well.”

Yes she was right. Song Hwa Rin was a different person now, after five years of training.

‘I guess I’ll have to agree with him on this to a certain degree.’

Song Hwa Rin made a small smile.

“All right. Let’s get ready.”

A long time ago she would not do anything that she did not want to do. But now she could do such things with a forced smile. She had changed, and she was not afraid of changes.

‘I will not become a complacent person.’

It had been quite a while since I had last walked the streets. I wanted to hear some news about my death, but nothing had been made known to the public yet. Why were they so late in announcing this?

I really wanted to go to the Alliance Headquarters and ask Kal Sa Ryang about it. ‘Why are you so late in taking care of business?’ But then, I was also worried that something might have happened.

While sitting down in one restaurant, contemplating, a group of youths made their way in. Among those youths was Song Hwa Rin. I could tell without even looking that it was her.

“Huh?”

After seeing me, she stopped. Her company naturally came to a stop as well. Those people were wearing ugly expressions after seeing me. I could tell right away that their eyes were green with envy. After seeing her for a few seconds I turned my head toward the window. Even though it was a short contact, I could tell her mood.

One of the male youths came toward me. He was wearing fancy clothing and had a fancy sword, watching me with a belittling stare. From this attitude, one could tell how arrogant he was.

“You rascal, they say that you came back from the dead? You look perfectly fine though.”

He was acting very friendly, but I had no idea who he was. Since I did not reply, his face scrunched up in a little grin.

“I heard that you were practicing martial arts? Why? Is it so that you could beat me up?”

Because I knew where he was going with this, I tossed out some words as well.

“Do you practice martial arts so that you can beat up people or do you practice it so that you can kill them?”

He was surprised, because he sensed that something was different, seeing my eyes.

Having accidentally shown that he was surprised, he now wanted to get back at me. “I heard that you were crying after getting beat up by Song Hwa Rin.”

When he said that, Song Hwa Rin, who was a few steps in front of us, frowned slightly and said, “I don’t recall saying that.”

“Why are you trying to defend him? Do you have feelings for him?”

“Never!”

From her face, I could read her feelings. She was annoyed with

both of us.

Whether he could read her expression or not, the other youth kept on annoying me.

“You debtor, your look is ruining my mood.”

Debtor? Had I ever borrowed money from this bastard? I ought to ask Kwang Du later. I did not want to have a confrontation with this bastard, so I got off my chair and was starting to leave.

“Next time make sure to change that look in your eyes!”

Song Hwa Rin did not do anything about this provocation. I was not in the mood to waste time with such petty things. I do not know why I had become Byuk Lee Dan, but I would not waste my time doing lame things.

From the looks of it, all the youths who were standing next to Song Hwa Rin seemed to be the next generation of martial arts leaders.

‘Look, you fools. The one who you have to be most afraid of in Kang Ho is standing right in front of you. She is scarier than any practitioners of the Demon Alliance.’

This was something that I used to say to the younger generations at banquets, when I was still the Alliance Master. The scariest thing about this world were women.

“Even if she was not a demon, her beauty could kill you.”

Though I might have said it jokingly, it was not really a joke. Of all the murders that happened in Kang Ho, the majority of them happened because of money, women, or both. A woman got more dangerous the more beautiful she was.

And if a woman was as beautiful as her, she would be the most dangerous of them all.

As I walked past her, neither she nor I spared a glance for the other.

Chapter 6: Minor Clan Lord Yang (1)

A fateful event took place the next evening.

As I was walking through the practice ground, a middle-aged man slowly approached me.

“Young Master Byuk, I heard the rumor that you were practicing martial arts. Is it for real this time?”

I knew of this man. I heard from Kwang Du that his name was Seo Jun and he is the Master of the Sword Sect which was run by our clan.

“Yes, I have started training.”

Even if I hadn't answered, he would have felt the changes in my glance and my body. But it wasn't enough to convince people about my actions, due to my previous mishaps.

“You know that all the problems you caused brought great deal of trouble for the Gaju-nim and the clan.” He was saying this with sincerity in his heart.

“I am sorry, I will not make the same mistake again.” Bowing my head, I truly apologized from the bottom of my heart.

He was a little bit disconcerted due to my actions, as this was not

how I normally acted.

It was going to take time getting used to everyone as well as everyone getting used to the new me.

“I will continue monitoring you, observing how you have reformed.”

As he was about to turn around I asked him a question. “What do you mean by our clan is in trouble because of me?”

His face hardened. “You don’t know what you have done?”

“No, I know.”

I didn’t question him any further. He wasn’t the only one that I could get that answer from.

The one who was going to tell me everything was busy cleaning the yard.

“What are you doing this late?”

Cleaning the yard usually took place in the morning. However, Kwang Du was cleaning yard late in the evening.

“The messenger said that Lord Yang was coming later this

evening.”

“Lord Yang?

“You really don’t remember anything?”

“No, I don’t.”

He looked at me with a questionable look every time, but he still believed me. If he didn’t, then he wouldn’t have explained everything in acute detail.

“He is the lord of the Yang Clan, Yang Gi Chul. The Yang Clan is the strongest clan in San Dong at the moment. Our clan was the strongest at one point.”

Following what Kwang Du said, there were many different factions and clans competing for power in San Dong. At one point our Byuk Clan was the strongest and had the most influence. But now the Yang Clan is the number one, the Song Clan is number two and our clan is not even in the top ten anymore.

“Why did we lose so much power and influence?”

Kwang Du looked baffled as he responded, “Are you really asking this question?”

It was as I expected. “Of course, it’s because of me.”

“Do you know how much it cost to clean up after your mess? Since then we are in a tight spot and our income diminished considerably. We had to release many our men, thus decreasing our power and influence.”

“Did we ever borrow money because of that?”

“Of course! We had to borrow money from different people, but we borrowed the most from Lord Yang.”

This reminded me of what happened yesterday. So, that Yang Gi Kang was the son of Lord Yang.

“How much did we borrow?”

He replied while looking at the pile of snow that he collected, “Way more than this pile.”

“Originally we had three Sword Sects, but slowly we had to consolidate everything into one. We had to let more than half of our maids and servants go. I don’t know for sure, but from what I heard from others, it’s been pretty hard...” Kwang Du couldn’t finish the last part and gave a big sigh.

This was all because of me, and he didn’t tell me everything, nor did he want to tell me everything that I did.

“So are you behind in your monthly wages?”

“No, we are not. The Gaju-Nim takes priority in our paying our monthly wages.”

Even so, the pay raise that they should have gotten had't come, and I was the reason for all of this.

“Let's just say that I f*cked up, how come are you so busy cleaning?”

“Can we talk later, young master? I am busy cleaning before Lord Yang comes.”

Kwang Du left rather suspiciously. Then someone behind me said something.

“It's because young master Yang disciplined Brother Kwang Du.”

When I turned around I saw a small figure. Kwang Du told me her name was Song He and said that she was very innocent child.

“He hit Kwang Du?”

I remembered that bastard from yesterday. He dared to hit Kwang Du?

“Yes, they couldn’t do anything to us before. But once our clan started declining they started acting up.”

“Why did he hit Kwang Du?”

“He said it was because there was trash on the ground and that lazy servants should get disciplined. But he was the one that brought the trash. He just wanted a reason to hit Brother Kwang Du.”

I finally understood why he was cleaning this late in the afternoon.

Song He’s eyes were tearing up, I could sense that she really loves Kwang Du.

“Was I there?”

She stared at me right in the eyes. This was more than enough for me to understand.

“You were so drunk that you were just laughing.”

Shit. Son of A. I got more mad at Byuk Lee Dan than Song Gi Gang, the one who hit Kwang Du.

“Why are you telling me this?”

“Yesterday, Brother Kwang Du said that you changed a lot in a good way. But I’m still not sure I believe it. But I will believe Brother Kwang Du.”

That was the last bit of willpower she had before turning red and leaving after bowing.

When I turned around I saw poor Kwang Du still cleaning and my heart grew heavy. “You are still so kind to me even though something like that happened.”

It became pretty chaotic when the Yang Clan showed up later that evening. Including their bodyguards, more than twenty people showed up.

It was considered rude to visit other Clans this late in the evening. Unless they wanted to intimidate or to give no face to that Clan, this usually didn’t happen. Also, if someone decides to visit late at night, they will bring the least amount of bodyguards to be more considerate of others.

Yang Gi Chul casually walked up to my father and casually tossed a greeting.

“HAHAHA, have you been well Lord Byuk.”

My father said with a bright face, “You must be tired from your travel, Lord Yang.”

A long time ago they were so humble in front of my father, they even came barefooted when my father called them. But now his attitude changed and he even walked arrogantly in front of my father. The best way to know someone's true intentions and feelings are by being in dire situations.

Yang Gi Kang was part of the horde that was following Yang Gi Chul.

After making eye contact with me he made some gesture with his hand. I think he was implying that I should change the look in my eyes.

Yang Gi Chul took the liberty of asking my father, "You know of Lord Peng Mun Do of the Western Water Peng Clan?"

"Of course I know of him."

"I was just coming from his house. We made an agreement on our new project."

"Oh! Congratulations."

"I have told him about you."

Would he really have done that? I think not.

Lord Yang gave me a bad first impression, just like his son. In my

previous life, I have met many different leaders throughout Kang Ho. From the cold and smooth leaders of big clans all the way to the leaders of a small clan who tries to kiss ass. I could claim that I knew the most about these people with power.

Usually someone who leaves a bad first impression will always act that way. Lord Yang was one of those people.

“Thank You for talking to him about me.”

“Haha. It is nothing. No one else takes better care of you than me.”

With every single one of his actions, I could sense his arrogance flowing out.

“Let’s talk more in depth inside.”

“Yes, let’s do that.”

My father led Yang Gi Chul inside the building.

I came out to give him a greeting, but he just walked passed me as if I didn’t even exist.

Sword Sect Master Seo Jun greeted the bodyguards of the Yang Clan. Thankfully the bodyguard in command didn’t try to irritate Seo Jun, rather he gave Seo Jun face.

I learned from Kwang Du the story behind why the Sword Sects were consolidated into one. Due to hard times, the other two masters left for other clan since other clans were offering them more money, but Seo Jun showed his loyalty to my father and stayed. Other clans really wanted Seo Jun and were offering him more money than he could possibly make here, but his loyalty didn't waver and he stayed with our clan.

Everyone knew of this, thus giving him face.

“Well well, we meet again.”

The one who tried to annoy me yesterday slowly walked towards me. He didn't know that my feeling for him have changed to anger.

Energy inside my dantian started turning and getting excited.

I really wanted to teach him a lesson. If it was me from the past I would have started with cussing him out. But I let it go this time for my father and the clan. If it was known that I hit him, it would have resulted in Kwang Du getting disciplined.

‘I am sorry Kwang Du let it go just for this one time.’

As if understanding my intention, Kwang Du kept his head lowered and never made eye contact with him.

Sh*t. This is pissing me off. If this continues, I might really cause some trouble.

“Since you are here, have some dinner before you go.”

I tried my best to keep my composure in front of him, and turned around. But he said something that ticked me off.

“You know, beggars have one of the nastiest prides. Don’t bullshit me, and pay back what you owe me. When will you pay off twenty thousand Nyang?”

Twenty thousand Nyang. This was enough money to build a small sized Clan. What kind of trouble had I gotten into that we had to borrow that much money?

“I should just sell you off to the slave market. Even then I can only get at most ten Nyang.”

Since they were special guests, the martial artists of our family couldn’t do anything and just hardened their faces.

I replied without even turning around, “I don’t owe it to you.”

“What did you say? Do you still believe your clan is the strongest under in this city?”

“I know we are not.”

“What do you know?”

“I know that I am trash.”

People who had their eyes on me were somewhat surprised. This was the time that I could prove to them that I was slowly changing.

I didn't say anything further and was slowly walked away. Then I heard a scream.

Chapter 7: Minor Clan Lord Yang(2)

When I turned around, I saw Yang Gi Kang forcefully trying to hug Song He.

“I shall play with you since your trash master doesn’t want to play with me.”

At this time Kwang Du stepped forward grabbing Yang Gi Kang’s arms and holding him back, “Young master, she is still a child.”

Yang GI Kang’s stare became sharper, “A mere servant dares to touch me?”

“I am sorry, I am truly sorry young master.”

Kwang Du quickly withdrew his hands and fell back.

Yang Gi Kang let go of Song He who he was going to play with for a while.

Kwang Du was calm, even though he had acted rashly without even thinking about the consequences that he might face later. Song He on the other hand was very anxious.

Yang Gi Kang wouldn’t even see what kind of feeling that these two have for each other. If he did, he probably wouldn’t have acted like this.

“Oh, I remember you” seeing as Yang GI Kang remembered Kwang Du, he spat on the floor.

I got a bad feeling from this.

“What is this dirty thing? Hey, answer me before I beat you up. What is this thing?”

“It is spit, young master”

“Why is this laying in the floor? Didn’t I tell you before to clean up the yard properly?”

“I will clean it up right away sir.”

As Kwang Du was about to clean up the spit with a rag, Yang GI Kang stepped on Kwang Du’s hand.

“Ahhh!”

“Hey, what are you trying to do with that?”

“Huh? I am trying to clean sir.”

“Hey, since it came from the mouth, you should clean it with your mouth.”

Kwang Du's face froze. Not only him, but everyone else who was watching this stared woodenly.

Seo Jung was especially nervous. He was debating whether he should intervene or not. If he intervened too rashly, no one knew how this maniac would react.

Song He came rushing forward. "Brother, I will clean it up."

Kwang Du said, "What do you mean! Go tend to the needs of the Gaju. Hurry up and go."

He really wanted Song He to leave this place. Song He bit her lips and looked at me. Kwang Du followed her line of sight and looked at me. Then everyone else looked at me.

"You should clean up this dirty thing."

After hearing my response everyone's face grew dark. Seo Jung looked especially disappointed. They were all thinking 'what was I hoping for from him?'

There was great sadness in Song He's eyes. It was as if she was saying 'see wasn't I right young master? I knew I couldn't trust you. You tricked brother Kwang Du'.

The victim Kwang Du had a disappointed look but said with a

calm voice, “Yes, I will clean it up.”

As Kwang Du was about to lick the spit with his tongue I stopped him.

“Not you.”

“What?”

“The one who spit should clean it up.”

I said to Yang Gi Kang with my chin up, “Yeah you, clean it up right now.”

“This son of a b*tch.”

“I don’t know who educated you, but didn’t your granddaddy ever teach you never to spit in another person’s house? Hurry up and clean it with your mouth.”

The faces of Seo Jung and other guards of our clan lit up. It was because I said what they wanted to say. At the same time the face of Yang Gi Kang grew pretty ugly.

“It seems as if you have become retarded after getting hit in the head by a girl.”

I disregarded him and raised Kwang Du up.

“Are you alright?”

“Why are you doing this? It’s ok young master. I will just clean it.”

“Why do you have to clean it?”

“Young master please don’t...”

The next moment I changed my voice and said to him, “As the heir of the Byuk Clan, I order you to step back.”

Aside from being good at martial arts I was also good at changing my voices.

“Yes, young master.”

He couldn’t disobey my command and backed off. Then I said to Seo Jung with the same tone of voice, “Please watch, as I will finish this.”

After staring at me with a blankly for a few seconds he lowered his head and said, “I, Seo Jung, humbly obey your order.”

Everyone was surprised. This was the first time Byuk Lee Dan

showed this kind of attitude towards Seo Jung and they were even more surprised that Seo Jung actually accepted his order. Every guard in our family did the same as Seo Jung and lowered their head.

Yang Gi Kang imitated my voice and said, “The heir of Byuk Clan orders. HAHAHA. After giving two orders, I think I got so scared that I almost wet my pants. You childish b*stard, stop trying this crap.”

As I stared the Yang Clan’s guard, some of them gave a dry cough.

“Don’t even clean it with your filthy mouth, it will only make the ground dirtier. Forget it. I will give you one change. If you truly apologize, I will forget everything that has happened here.”

Would he really apologize? I already knew the answer but I said it anyway to show that I had given him a chance.

“What if I say no?”

“Then you most likely will be punished.”

He came close to me holding his stomach laughing.

“Well then, will the great heir of Byuk Clan give me some pointers? Oh, I have been waiting for this day for a long time. You bankrupt bastard, I will make you disabled so that you can beg on

the street.”

Before he even finished speaking he rushed forward and went for a punch to my face. But I was not someone who was just going to sit idle. He was someone that I didn't even have to use my martial arts for. I simply dodged his fist and returned with an attack of my own.

Smack!

I smacked him square on the chin, but he didn't fall down. Was it because my fist was too weak? Of course not, because I didn't want to finish him with one hit, I used the least amount of energy possible.

Yang Gi Kang charged at me again with fiery eyes.

“Son of a b*tch!”

He came at me again with his fist. But this time he put some energy into his fist and was wildly swinging his fist everywhere. If I got hit with it I could have been seriously injured.

Swoosh, swoosh.

It was the sound of a Ki infused fist flying wildly.

Seo Jung wanted to intervene and stop him, but didn't as he saw

me easily dodge the attacks. But what surprised him more was how accurately I was returning my fist.

Smack! His cheek turned one way and then the other.

Smack! Smack! Smack!

I continuously smacked him in his stomach, chest and face. It looked as though they were light hits, but in actuality Yang Gi Kang had bruises all over his body.

I was teaching him a lesson. The prank that you tried to pull on those two could have scarred them for life. But you will never understand even if I tell you with my words, so I am telling it to you with my fist.

Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack!

Even though he looks fine on the outside, his internal wounds would take at least couple of months to heal. I wanted to beat him even more, but I couldn't do that.

Someone from the Yang Clan intervened, "What have you done?"

I replied to them calmly, "All of you saw it from the beginning. You know what he did. He wanted someone else to clean up his spit with their mouth. Is that something a normal human being would ask?"

No one from the Yang clan could say anything. They were so embarrassed that they could barely lift up their heads.

Getting up slowly and painfully, Yang Gi Kang said with a painful expression, “Kill that son of a b*tch! This is an order!”

The ones who received that order were all abashed, because they never expected to receive this order.

Seo Jung said from our side, “I think young master Yang is just bit bewildered, so I think you all can just disregard it. Just think of the consequences of obeying that order.”

As he was saying this he slowly moved his hand to his sword showing to others that he will not just sit back and watch if they tried anything.

Since both sides were evenly matched, everyone was tense and didn't want to do anything. But if things did go down, we had a bit of an upper hand since we were in our territory.

So someone from the Yang Clan said something, “You are right, Elder Seo.”

Regardless of getting a warning, killing the heir of the Byuk clan was something that never crossed their minds. This most likely would have to be resolved by the Gaju.

At this time Yang Gi Gang unsheathed his sword.

Shiing!

He couldn't control his rage and charged at me with his sword.

“No!” Seo Jung screamed, but he was a bit late as Yang Gi Gang's sword was about to reach my heart.

Swoosh.

I easily dodged the blade. To others it might be difficult, it certainly looked difficult to execute, but for me, the one who was once considered the Strongest Under the Heavens, it was as easy as walking.

Crack!!!

I dislocated his arm.

“AHHHHH!!!”

But I wasn't done with him yet. I slapped him couple of times in the face. His teeth fell out all over the place. It was not just one or two teeth, it was a good dozen. Then I finished him up with a punch to the stomach that sent him flying.

He went from being bedridden for couple of months to a couple of years.

I was just returning the favor that I owed him. If it was the old me, I would have killed him.

Because this happened so fast the guards of the Yang family couldn't do anything. But they slowly acted like a headless chicken going in every direction to get the doctor, reporting to the Lord, and guarding the door.

The first one to approach me was Kwang Du he said in a soft voice, "Young master! Are you crazy? Why did you lay your hand on him? Now what are we going to do?"

He was so worried that he was about to cry at any moment. "Get out of here first, Young Master. Let the Gaju take care of this. If Lord Yang comes, we will be in big trouble! Please get out of here!"

"No!"

"WHY?"

"Because you will most likely get beaten up because of me."

He was already expecting it since it all started because of him.

"Are you moved?"

“No, this is not the time to be joking around! Please get out of here!”

“I think it’s already too late.”

I pointed with my chin to the direction that was behind him.

Far in the distance I could see my father and Yang Gi Chul rushing out to the courtyard.

“Don’t worry. When I die, I will ask them to bury you with me.”

Kwang Du sat down where he was standing and murmured, “... You are pretending that you don’t remember, right? You did this just so that you can kill me, right?”

Chapter 8: Minor Clan Lord Yang(3)

Yang Gi Chul leapt towards his son and landed next to him.

“What happened?”

Rather than being worried or surprised. his reaction after finding out what happened was disappointment and anger, “Let me ask again, what happened here?”

After hearing his father speak Yang Gi Kang forcefully opened his eyes. He said in a painful voice, “Father... it was him... he tried to kill me...”

Finding out that I almost crippled his son Yang Gi Chul gave me the death stare. Since he couldn't attack me directly right now he asked one of his subordinates.

“Is this true?”

“The thing is...”

The subordinate was hesitant and was mumbling something.

Slap!

Yang Gi Chul slapped his subordinate's face.

“You stupid bastard. Why were you just standing there, letting him get all beaten up like that?”

Because he couldn't hold back his rage he kept on hitting his subordinate.

Smack! Slap! Smack! Slap!

I knew the true intention behind those attacks. The one Yang Gi Chul was hitting was not his subordinate, but me. It was a warning for my father that the next one that he was going to hit was me.

The subordinate who was getting hit finally collapsed after passing out. However, Yang Gi Chul didn't seem like he was satisfied with that, so he stepped on his subordinate a couple more times before walking in front of my father.

“How will you take responsibility for this?”

Father stared at me. I looked back at my father blankly yet proudly. I wonder how he took my action?

I was afraid he was going to be forced into something, but he calmly asked what happened.

“What happened here?”

Seo Jung explained what happened in full detail to my father. How Yang Ki Kang was forcefully trying to flirt with Song He, how Kwang Du tried to stop it, but was told to do something inhumane, and how I gave him a chance to apologize before disciplining him. Luckily, he didn't forget anything important.

If he was a normal father, he would keep his head lowered in shame. But Yang Gi Chul was the complete opposite as he was questioning my father.

“For a couple of maids and servants, you dare make my son like this?”

There was no further need to question his character. Because what he said showed his true character.

Then he threatened me, “How will you take responsibly for what you did?”

They were like two peas in a pod.

But, I saved my words as well as my fist. It wasn't a matter of winning or losing, but a matter of face.

At this time my father said something that I didn't expect, “I think your side should take responsibility for this.”

Not just me but everyone else was surprised. Everyone's glance went toward my usually calm father. He had a very fierce and

sharp atmosphere around him.

“What did you just say?”

“If your son trying to beat my son with his fist wasn’t enough, he even raised his blade against my son. He raised his blade against my weaponless son! I think there are enough witnesses here to prove what happened.”

Father looked around the whole courtyard, giving everyone a glance. Our clan’s subordinate gave a nod while the Yang Clan’s subordinates stood there in silence. There were too many people present to say anything otherwise.

My father added a little more salt to the wound, “If it was someone else I wouldn’t, but since it is you I will give you some face and forget everything that happened.”

“What?”

“You know if everyone from Kang Ho gets a wind of what happened, your clan will become the laughing stock of not just this city, but other areas as well.”

Yang Gi Chul’s face turned ugly. He was about to explode in rage and raise his blade against my father.

“So what are you trying to do right now?”

My father returned the question back to him, “What are you trying to do?”

The pressure between the two Gaju collided. But my father had the advantage.

I didn't know that my father was hiding this kind of expression. My father's normal expression was just an illusion hiding his true nature. He was a tiger hiding behind his calm and collected nature. My father was a martial artist to the bone. How expert of a martial artist he is was a question for later, but I finally understood why Seo Jung never left my father. He truly understood my father and saw him as someone worthy of his loyalty.

Yang Gi Chul couldn't act rashly so he came out another way. “First pay up the money that you borrowed.”

“Sure.”

The Yang clan was more powerful than our clan, but this time they only brought twenty men, so they didn't really want to have a clash with my father. They never truly had any confrontation with my father before, so they were all afraid of my father's capabilities. Thus, they couldn't do anything.

“The guests are leaving.”

His expression was stoic as if he was saying ‘spray the salt at the

guests to chase them away’.

Yang Gi Chul left our house with his son and subordinates, full of rage and anger.

My father asked me a question, “Why did you do that?”

My action today really surprised my father. He was going to believe in me and was going to ask question later.

“They tried to mock our clan. What he did was something that a normal human wouldn’t do.”

Then I stared at Kwang Du and Song He. They were flabbergasted, this was the first time that they heard that they were part of my family from my mouth.

After glancing between Kwang Du and me couple of times, he left for his room with his hands in his back.

“Elder Seo follow me.”

“Yes, Gaju-nim.”

It seemed as if they were going to discuss future measures. He didn’t compliment me or criticize me. But I took his silence as a compliment.

As Seo Jung was following my father he glanced toward me. Rather than giving me a look of criticism, he gave me a look of acceptance.

Not only Seo Jung, but everyone else from the servants and maids, to the guards were all looking at me in a new light.

Especially Song He, she looked as if she wanted to run towards me and give me a hug.

I squatted next to Song He and stared her in the eyes. “Were you scared?”

“No... Yes.”

“Don’t be afraid of him. He isn’t even worthy of being afraid of. Don’t worry, I, as well as everyone else here, will protect you.”

Song He looked at everyone, and they all gave her a smile and nodded. These were the ones who were truly loyal to my father after everyone else left.

“Thank You, Young Master, and everyone.”

She finally shed the tears that she was trying to hold back. This was the first time that she truly felt safe.

Before she left, she said in my ear, “Now I truly believe you,

Young Master.”

After everyone left, I was alone with Kwang Du. He collapsed on the floor, since his legs gave out after being so nervous.

“I think I’m going to vomit.”

“Don’t, then you’ll have to clean it up.”

He gave me a sick smile.

“Are you not afraid young master?”

“Why would I be afraid?”

“What if they attack us? I told you before that right now the Yang Clan is the strongest in the city.”

“Didn’t you see their subordinates’ expressions? They are resentful of their master. There are not many who are truly loyal to them. On the other hand, you know how our subordinates are. These are the men who are truly loyal.”

“But if we fight, they have the numbers advantage.”

“War isn’t fought with just numbers. And war doesn’t happen that easily.”

You could trust me you fool, you have no idea how many campaigns I have been in and how experienced I am in this. I practically lived in the battlefield.

“Someone who is as calculating as Lord Yang won’t move that rashly. He will only attack when victory is guaranteed.”

“Even if his son is crippled?”

“He didn’t even carefully observe his son. He got mad not because his son got hurt, but because I didn’t give him face and attacked his son.”

“Is there a difference?”

“There is, this is a different type of rage.”

Yang Gi Chul was someone who was very arrogant and prideful.

“I don’t understand what you are talking about.”

“You don’t have to. Go and get some rest.”

As he was about to leave, he turned around and grabbed my hand.

“Young Master.”

“What?”

“Thank you for what happened.”

“Alright. Make sure you never forget what happened.”

“Hehe.”

He left taking large and buoyant strides.

From my experience, I knew that Yang Gi Chul wasn't the type make a move immediately. He would find a way to take revenge without getting his hands dirty. If he did he make a move, he would do it in the most gruesome and cruel way possible.

So I decided to make a move first. After this crisis was over, I decided to train in silence.

“Lord Yang is a prideful person. He will never let go of this quietly.”

My father replied to my mother, “But he won't do anything rashly.”

“He is someone who is very calculating. So, let's just pay off our

debt. He could use that as an excuse to do something.”

Byuk Do Jun nodded. He understood Yang Gi Chul perfectly. But getting twenty thousand nyang was no easy task.

When they were doing well others couldn't do anything to them. But now that they were in this situation, others were bullying them to gain the favor of the Yang Clan. However, he didn't resent them. He resented himself for not rearing his son the correct way. This all happened because of his ignorance.

Im Ae Hwa put a small treasure box on the table.

“If we sell this we could get enough money to pay off the debt.”

When Byuk Do Jun opened the box, there was a small jade necklace inside the box.

“This is?”

Byuk Do Jun looked surprised and shook his head.

“No, we can never sell this. This is the heirloom that was passed down from you clan. This is your most treasured item.”

“No, it's not my most treasured item, if we could sell...”

“No, until you bury me you will never sell this.”

“This is just an item.”

“No, it is not just an item, it is the heirloom that your father gave you. Your most treasured item”

“What I treasure the most is you and Dan-ee.”

Byuk Do Jun couldn't say anything. He knew full well how much his wife loved him. He knew how much she had sacrificed for her son, and how much more she could sacrifice. But he didn't want her to sacrifice anymore.

Im Ae Hwa tried to convince her husband.

“You shouldn't be stingy about this. Something like this can be bought again. But there are certain things that can't be bought.”

Since her husband was firmly saying no, she changed her strategy.

“Honey, I think Dan-ee finally grew up. What we have to protect is not something like this but our child.”

“Do you trust your son?”

She said without hesitating, “Of course I trust him.”

“Even though he tricked you all this time?”

“It is because he is our son.”

Even though their son had said that he was going to change his ways many times before, this was the first time that they thought something was different.

This time he had proved it with his actions. For the last ten days, he was training in martial arts and when Kwang Du was in trouble, he didn't hesitate to intervene.

Byuk Do Jun gave a sigh, “I don't know.”

He was surprised that with just ten days of training, how his son able to cripple Yang Gi Kang. His son didn't even use any techniques, but with just his bare hand beat up Yang Gi Kang. He was worried that his son might have learned some dangerous cultivation technique.

Let's just say the Yang Gi Kang is bad at martial arts, but the way his son talks, the way he acts and even his stare had changed.

“Maybe he has just grown up now.”

Byuk Do Jun forcefully nodded at his wife. He just nodded and

agreed with his wife, hoping that this wasn't a fluke. But on the other hand, he was happy. He was feeling proud that his son finally grew up. There was now something that he could hope for. With the change in his son he wanted to raise the Byuk Clan to its past glory.

“Anyway, I understand your thoughts clearly.”

Byuk Do Jun took the box.

“Thank you for understanding me.”

But he never had the thought of selling the necklace. He just took it for safekeeping, since he was afraid that his wife might sell it behind his back. With this new profound strength, he wanted he face this challenge head on.

“Don't worry too much, my wife.”

Im Ae Hwa smiled and grabbed her husband's hand.

“I am not worried. I have never been worried since marrying you.”

Chapter 9: Minor Clan Lord Yang(4)

I stood outside listening to their conversation.

I wasn't eavesdropping on purpose. I came here to see them and apologize, but instead I overheard what they said.

It is embarrassing to say but... seeing her like this, my mother sounded cute. Even though she acted all tough and fierce on the outside, when she was alone with my father she is really well-mannered and lady like.

I looked at the sky. At first I thought that the heaven allowed me to reincarnate for myself, then I thought the heaven allowed me to reincarnate for Byuk Lee Dan, but now I think the heaven allowed me to reincarnate for my parents.

Then I thought to myself, 'is this really all right?' I am someone who never truly understood what love or family was. I am a really terrible person who couldn't sleep at night unless I dished out revenge that was ten times worse than what I had received.

Creak.

Mother opened the door and came outside. She was surprised to see me.

"Dan-Ah? Why didn't you come in when you arrived?"

I went inside and said what I wanted to say.

“Don’t sell it. It’s no use even if you sell it.”

“Did you hear our conversation?”

“Yes, I am sorry. I didn’t mean to eavesdrop on your conversation.”

“It’s alright. But what do you mean it’s no use?”

“Even if you pay them back it’s no use.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Because he is someone who will not let this matter go even if we pay them back.”

I looked at my father and asked him, “Aren’t I right? Or have I misjudged him?”

Before he left, Yang Gi Chul’s eyes were full of ill intent. It was the eye of someone who truly wished to kill the other party. I saw this plenty of times in my previous life.

The look in his eyes told me the answer.

“Let your father take care of this. Take your mother and stay at your uncle’s house for a while.”

From what I heard, my mother had a younger brother who lived farther away in Ahn Hwe. He said this to protect me and my mother.

“Are you trying to fight them?”

“You don’t need to know.”

“This is something I need to know. Isn’t this something related to our clan?”

Because this was first time the Byuk Lee Dan said something like this, my mother’s face brightened. This was the parental love. With just one word their expression changes.

“Let your father will take of this.”

From this conversation I confirmed that father was a very strong person, but I didn’t want to leave this problem completely to him.

“Allow me to help you take care of this mess.”

“Why are you being selfish? Why aren’t you thinking about your mother?”

“But if something happened to you, father, then wouldn’t mother also be deeply saddened?”

“What a rude thing to say!”

Father got angry, but there was a smile on my mother’s face.

“You are wrong. Rather than being depressed my whole life, I would rather die a hundred, no a thousand times, together with my family.”

Mother looked at father and said, “Even though we have lived with each other for so long, do you still not know me?”

Father gave a light sigh.

Why wouldn’t he know? He knew perfectly well that in situation like this, mother would try her best to not leave his side.

If I was still the old Byuk Lee Dan, father would have convinced my mother by saying that she needed stay alive for me. But since I barged in, saying that I am going to help him, he didn’t have time nor a way to convince her.

“It is dangerous time and anything can happen.”

Mother just gave a small laugh, “I think it’s been awhile since I felt this excited.”

Without even realizing it, I wore a small smile. She acted very lady like when she was having a conversation with my father before, but right now she was showing her fierce side.

While looking at me she asked, “Aren’t you getting excited as well?”

“I am also getting fired up.”

“Right?”

I felt sorry for my mother, but I will not allow anything exciting to happen here. I planned on wrapping up this whole mess without letting any of those trash set a foot here.

“I plan on taking Kwang Du with me to train in the mountain for a few days.”

“Be safe.”

My parents agreed hesitantly. Right now, they wanted to send me away as soon as possible.

As soon as I left their room I went to find Kwang Du.

“Huh? What did you just say?” Kwang Du asked me with wide eyes.

I don't know why, but it was so much fun teasing Kwang Du.

“You are coming with me to go to Lord Yang's house.”

“Do you really hate me that much? Why are you bringing me to someplace so dangerous?”

“I have good news and a bad news. Which one do you want to hear first?”

“Well I think I want to be slapped first, so tell me the bad one first.”

“This all happened because of you.”

He lowered his face in shame.

“Please tell me the good news now.”

“You are the only person that I trust.”

Kwang Du gave a small sigh, “It's a shame how terrible your social life is.”

After saying that, there was a little smirk on his face. I think what I said about him made him feel really happy. Such a simple

guy.

“But why are we going there? The Gaju-nim asked us to do something there right? It’s not like we are going there for no reason right?”

“If you want to think like that to calm your heart down, then feel free do think however you like.”

“Saying that, you don’t mean...?”

“We caused this mess, so we need to take care of it.”

“Oh my god! You have a plan, right young master?”

“We will think about it along the way.”

“Where do you have to be hit so that you become a completely different person?”

“You can become like that too. Where we’re going, many people will try to beat you up or kill you.”

I don’t know why I am naturally making these jokes, but this was something that I had never thought to do in my previous life. Was it because I gained my youth back, or was it because I felt resentment towards my previous life? Or maybe it was because of Kwang Du. It was fun conversing and joking with him. Anyway, it

seemed that even my mind had gotten younger as well.

“Get ready. We will leave soon.”

I had my reasons for bringing Kwang Du along. It was so that I could make up my mind about his future. Was I going to let him just clean the yards all day, or was I going to invest in him and take him along with me throughout my journey? I didn't know which was the right choice, but I would let fate decide.

“... I will kill him. I'm going to cut him piece by piece and feed him to the pigs. Skin him alive and toss him in the salt basket. Gut him up...”

Yang Gi Kang was thinking of the most gruesome way to kill me. Even though he was whistling because half his teeth were missing, his ill intent could still be felt.

“...I'm going to break all his bones. I'm going to make him cry, make him regret that he was ever born.”

He let rage consume him. The servants around him couldn't even breathe. It wasn't because of his curses or rages, nor was it because of the medicinal scent the bandages had. It was because any mistake... no even a breath could have gotten them killed.

The maid who was taking care of him was scared to the bones because she was afraid that his rage could be taken out on her.

Luckily, before that happened, Yang Gi Chul came in and excused them from the room.

“You may leave.”

“Yes, Milord.”

The maid desperately prayed outside that once she went back inside, Yang Gi Kang would be dead. But that was never going to happen, because he would receive the best treatments and the best medicine.

Yang Gi Chul gave his son a disdainful look.

“...Father.”

“You stupid rascal. You let that punk beat you like this.”

Yang Gi Kang was ready to cry.

“That punk!”

He was about to say that Byuk Lee Dan was a lot stronger than he expected, but he thought better of it. Right now he couldn't say anything to his father.

“Please kill that punk! And his parents too! No, not just them,

wipe out their whole clan!”

If he was a normal parent, he would have disciplined his son, but this was Yang Gi Chul. Would he really let something like this go? Would he change his mind after coming back home?

“I already plan on doing that.”

He couldn't forget what happened that day in front of all his subordinates. He couldn't forget Byuk Do Jun's stare and actions that day.

‘He dared to ignore me?’ He was someone who didn't let go of grudges that easily.

‘He dared to talk back to me? Someone whose clan isn't even in the top ten. Ha, it's laughable!’

Even if his son didn't say anything, he was going to wipe out their clan. He might not get his money back, but he would get their heads.

Yang Gi Kang grew excited seeing his father's rage and said, “Send our subordinates immediately and wipe them out!”

“You idiot! They are already expecting something. There will be too many casualties on our side.”

Did war happen overnight? They didn't have a legitimate reason to wipe out the Byuk Clan. If he did something without reason, he would making an enemy out of Kang Ho and most likely become the laughing stock of the city. He was still calculating even though he was full of rage.

“So I invited someone over.”

Yang Gi Kang could roughly guess who it was.

“You called Hyeol Gun?”

Yang Gi Chul gave a nod while making an evil smile.

“Since they angered me, they should be prepared to take my wrath.”

Kwang Du and I were in a carriage headed for Dong Pyung. This was where the Yang Clan's manor was located.

I wanted to save time by going on horseback, but since Kwang Du was still a novice at riding, I decided that we should use a carriage. Even though we arrived a few days later, I wasn't too worried.

Duu. Duu. Duu.

The scenery outside quickly changed. Even though it had been twenty days since I came into this life, there was still no news

about my death. I was worried that I might have reincarnated in a different era, but I discovered that I was reborn on the day that I died.

I understood the gravity of announcing the news about the death of the Murim Alliance master. But it might be problematic if a couple of months pass without an announcement.

“Do you have any money that you have been hiding?”

“Am I such a person who could save twenty thousand nyang?”

Kwang Du gave a deep sigh.

“Of course not.”

“So I don’t have it.”

Someone could have asked that if I lived over thirty years of my life as the Alliance Master, shouldn’t I have some money hidden away? Have at least one secret storage somewhere? But my answer was no.

Since I was young, all I did was train like a madman. I had no desires besides getting stronger. I loved the feeling of defeating my enemy and getting stronger, such that I didn’t have any feeling for money. In my eyes piece of gold was just another piece of rock.

After becoming the Alliance Master, I didn't need things such as money. Was I going to get cold? Was I going to go hungry? Everything that I needed, the Alliance took care of it for me. If I had the thought of saving money I could have saved thousands, no, millions of nyang. But I didn't have such thoughts and wasn't very attached to the material things in life.

The amount that the alliance invested in me was innumerable. All of my medical pill and herbs that they gave me couldn't be counted. But of course they got back their investment during my campaign against the Thirteen Demon Alliance. Anyway, because of their investment I was able to reach the peak of martial arts, and I was grateful for that.

“What have you been reading so intently?”

I think he was curious about the book that I had been reading since we got in the carriage. So I showed him the book I was reading.

Kwang Du looked surprised and said, “What? Isn't that the Brightmoon Sword Art? Isn't this the Gaju's personal technique?”

“Yeah. Why are you so surprised?”

“Because this is such a precious technique. Aren't you afraid that you will attract attention and someone will try to steal it?”

“I think the way that you are acting is attracting more attention.”

“Oh.”

Kwang Du said normally, “HAHA, isn’t the Brightmoon Sword Art just an ordinary technique?”

“I’m going to tell father what you just said.”

Kwang Du said with a crying face, “Why are you teasing me!? Gaju-nim, the Brightmoon Sword Art is the best sword art in the world.”

“Saying that, you seem really suspicious.” (TL note: lol I feel bad for Kwang Du)

“So what, young master!”

The Brightmoon Sword Art really didn’t stimulate me at all. ‘Not too shabby, I’d rate it as a mid-tier’. It wasn’t that I was belittling this sword art, but because I was extremely proficient in martial arts, there weren’t many techniques that could excite me anymore. The purpose of learning this technique was so that I could hide my original techniques.

“But how did you come out carrying this precious thing?”

“This is just a copied version. The real one is still within the clan.”

“No that’s not what I meant...”

“What if someone steals it from me?”

“Yes, that’s what I am afraid of!”

“Don’t worry. To practice this sword art you need to have an understanding of certain ki flow or it will be useless.”

“Oh, so that’s how it was.”

When I told my father that I wanted to learn Brightmoon Sword Art, I received a copied version of it. I went inside and glanced through the ki circulation manual that goes along with it. I was able to remember most of the contents of that book due to how good my memory had become.

Practicing two cultivation techniques was not recommended, because it can cause Qigon Deviation if you’re not careful. Of course that was for almost everyone else in Kang Ho, but who was I?

If I practiced something that was comparable to the Heavenly Protection Cultivation Technique, I might have gotten some backlash, but I wasn’t worried since I was going to be mastering such a mediocre cultivation technique.

“You know young master, you look really awkward when reading, because you usually don’t read much.”

“Do you want to learn martial arts?”

Kwang Du hesitated, then said no.

“Your answer is pretty late.”

“No. I don’t have any talent for it.”

“What does your talent have to do with anything? Haven’t you seen Yang Gi Kang, even he knows some martial arts.”

“He was raised from a good family. He probably would have learned it from a good master.”

“To become a person of Kang Ho, having a good family and master is not that important.”

“Then what is more important?”

“Fate.”

“What fate?”

“Fate with Kang Ho.”

Kwang Du stared at me with wide eyes, blinking couple of times before questioning me “Ehh, what do you mean by that? You must be joking. If you don’t want to answer me then don’t.”

To become a person of Kang Ho, fate was the most important. If you didn’t have fate then you will die prematurely, or even if you wanted to, you wouldn’t be able to learn.

As I was enjoying the scenery outside Kwang Du asked me, “How do you know if I have fate with Kang Ho?”

“I don’t.”

Chapter 10: The Place My Sword Points To

(1)

That evening we arrived at an inn near our destination, so we sent back the carriage.

Kwang Du went to book two rooms but I stopped him.

“Just give us one room.”

Kwang Du quickly replied, “Haha, I knew you would do something like this, so I came prepared. I will just sleep over there at the table.”

“You usually take my jokes very lightly, but why are you taking it so seriously this time?”

“What?”

“Hey Crazy Head, how can I allow you to sleep outside in the cold?”

“You don’t mean!?”

“Yes, we are going to sleep in the same room. We could just ask for single room with two beds. Why should we waste money booking two rooms? Or is it that you snore?”

“No, it’s not that, but how can I dare sleep in your room, young master.”

“What? You don’t want to sleep next to a piece of trash?”

“Why are you saying something like this? I wouldn’t dare disrespect you like that.”

“All right then. Innkeeper, book us a room with two beds.”

After booking a room, we didn’t go up to it, but instead sat down at one of the tables.

“Let’s have some drinks.”

“With me?”

Kwang Du stared blankly at me.

“Do you see anyone else I can share a drink with?”

Kwang Du said with wide eyes, “This is a first. This is the first time that I am sharing a room and drink with you.”

I really didn’t want to repeat myself, but Byuk Lee Dan is seriously a stupid idiot.

After ordering our food and drink, we sat across from each other. Kwang Du still seemed dazed after we booked a single room. I felt sorry for Kwang Du since he had to take most of my teasing and jokes.

“Here, have a drink.”

When I was about to pour him a drink, he was still hesitant.

“You can’t do this young master. Allow me to pour you one first.”

“It’s alright. You receive one from me first.”

“Young master.”

“You’re older than me. Receive one from me first.”

In reality, I was at least couple times older than him.

“You said Sa Hae Dong Do, didn’t you? Here.” (Translator note: Sae Hae Dong Do means to go through a sea of death for your comrade.)

“I can’t. Don’t try to bullshit me with that.”

But he finally gave in and received a drink from me.

“You can’t do this. Your servant will be spoiled. This will be the only time that I receive a drink from you. I will never forget it.”

After a while he looked like he had an epiphany.

“I get it now. You’re going to take me over there to kill me, right? That’s the reason why you’re being so nice to me. right? It is said that before a cow is taken to the butcher, the owner will give it a final meal. Right?”

This lightened the mood as he started drinking, becoming drunk rather quickly. He said that I once drank ten bottles. I think that was an exaggeration, but I truly didn’t know how much tolerance I had.

In my previous life, I was never truly drunk. This was because most assassins would poison the wine, since you lose control of your body after you become drunk. Living in fear of assassinations, on the occasions that I had to drink, I developed the habit of circulating my cultivation technique to expunge anything alcoholic or poisonous from my system; so I never truly knew the feeling of being drunk.

But today, I drank casually without a care in the world. Soon I started feeling the alcohol overtake me. How long had it been since I last drank like this? Was this the first time?

“Oh right, young master, I didn’t have the chance to ask you last time about your martial arts. How is it possible that you were able

to beat him so easily?”

“I think it’s the result of my training.”

“With only ten days of training?”

“Ten days are more than enough to take care of trash like that.”

Kwang Du started evaluating me from head to toe. “It is still you, my young master, yet why does it feel like you are different?”

“Maybe I’m a late bloomer.”

“I’m not expecting a big bowl. [You’re just a bowl that doesn’t break](#), right.”

(Translator note: This is a play on words with late bloomer. In Korean Hanja late bloomer means “it takes time to mold a big bowl”.)

It seemed like Kwang Du was drunk.

“Yeah, I won’t break.”

“Promise me that you won’t go back to being how you were before.”

“Why does my promise matter?”

“It is important to me. I need to hear it from you.”

“Fine, I promise.”

Now Kwang Du let out a deep breath, and we went back to discussing what we were discussing before.

“I was hiding my martial arts. I’m stronger than you think.”

Because I couldn’t tell him the actual truth, I had to tell him a version of partial truth.

“Why?”

“To survive in Kang Ho, you need to hide your abilities.”

“Is that the reason why you were acting like a spoiled brat all this time?”

“No. After getting beaten up by Song Hwa Rin, reality smacked me in the face, and I realized that I couldn’t live like this.”

He could only believe it because I changed literally after that day. After getting nearly beaten to death I had changed my ways. So he most definitely understood me.

“So Lady Song is a benefactor.”

“You could say that.”

“Since we’re talking about her... Please don’t let her go. She is too good of a catch to let go.”

“Why do you like her so much?”

“Isn’t she beautiful? What else do you need? You don’t have to worry too much about the problem between men and women, because after you marry it is naturally bound to solve itself.”

Smiling, I was about to fill his glass, but he snatched it away from me.

“I told you, you are going to spoil your servant.”

“So what if you get a bit spoiled. It’s ok.”

Kwang Du was getting more and more red.

“Are you going to buy the drinks?”

“Do you have the nerve to say that in this emotional moment, young master?”

“Do you not have money?”

“Just take your liver out and drink from that.”

Contradictory to his words, he quickly finished that last drop of wine.

“All right young master! I will buy today. I’m going to open up my wallet and spend some money that I’ve been saving.”

“Lady, bring one more bottle.”

“Don’t be like this.”

Kwang Du and I drank till it was late. This was the first time that I felt this happy.

The next day we arrived at Dong Pyeong, where the Yang Clan had their headquarters.

The first thing we did was check in at the biggest inn in the area.

“Isn’t it better to go to a smaller inn so that we don’t attract so much attention?”

“If we do that, we’re going to attract even more attention.”

“Really?”

“If we can’t hide within the clouds, isn’t it better to hide under the sun?”

After entering the inn, Kwang Du was convinced, “I think you are right.”

This was a big inn that was bustling with over a hundred guests, travelers and merchants. There were over fifty tables and enough chairs to seat hundreds of people.

“You wouldn’t even know if someone got killed in one of the corners.”

“Who knows if something like that happened?”

“It’s scary. The world of Kang Ho, that is.”

When Kwang Du said something about Kang Ho, I sensed some change in his heart. I don’t know whether it was because of me or because of Yang Gi Kang, but I could sense that he was growing a bit excited.

I remembered my conversation with Song Hwa Rin.

‘Do people really change that easily?’

‘There is nothing that changes as easily as humans.’

After booking only one room in this inn as well, we found a seat and ate our meals. While eating, I listened carefully to anything related to the Yang Clan, but there was nothing about Yang Gi Chul getting injured.

There was bound to be some rumor pertaining to this. More than twenty men from the Yang clan were present that day. But how come there was nothing pertaining to Yang Gi Chul?

“What do you plan on doing now, young master?”

“I need to figure out what they have planned for us.”

“How will you do that?”

“Since no one on the outside knows anything, I need to ask someone from inside.”

Kwang Du said sincerely, “Can you entrust this task to me?”

Because he said it without hesitating, I think he decided on this before coming here.

“How come you want to do this?”

“I don’t know, but I just want to try it.”

“It could be dangerous. If you get caught they could torture you, beat you up and kill you.

“It’s ok, I will tell them that you are here and that you ordered me before they torture me.”

“You must tell them that I am here. That is being cleverly loyal.”

“I was just joking. But is there such thing as clever loyalty?”

“There is.”

The highest type of loyalty was ‘blind loyalty.’

But I wasn’t expecting that type of loyalty from Kwang Du.

“Isn’t it betrayal?”

“No, it’s clever loyalty.”

“It’s hard. Anyway I won’t regret it. Just trust in me.”

“Alright, I trust you. Make sure you bring something back.”

Kwang Du took a deep breath with an excited look, since this was his biggest challenge yet.

“Your role is very important right now.”

“My role was important since you were born.”

Haha, that was true because without him, I wouldn’t have been able to adjust to my current lifestyle this quickly.

“I will give my life. It doesn’t matter, since I spent all my savings on ordering five of those expensive bottles of alcohol.”

“You ordered the last two.”

“You should have stopped me!”

“Should I stop you now?”

“No.”

“You were firm like this back then too.”

“Haha, I will be leaving now.”

My parents gave him some money for us to use, so he was practically my wallet.

After taking a few steps, he came back and whispered in my ear, “After seeing me leave, you will follow me right? You’re going to see how I do, right?”

“If that’s what makes you feel better, then think however you want.”

I was going to fully trust in Kwang Du for this. Whether he lived or died, I didn’t care. I think he read my mood.

Pouting his mouth, he said, “You pay for the drink when we leave.”

Kwang Du left the inn.

Why did I allow him to go on this dangerous mission? Because I felt something in him when he first came next to me when I was bedridden. I trusted him. I trusted that our fate would not end as easily as this. And... By doing this I could see whether he was fated with Kang Ho.

So... Please succeed.

Chapter 11: The Place My Sword Points To

(2)

It had been three days, but there was still no sign of Kwang Du. He could have been captured, tortured or killed, but I wasn't worried in the slightest. All I did these past days were eat, sleep, and practice the Brightmoon Sword Art, not caring about anything regarding rumors.

The result of these past three days was visible. I was able to perfectly master the Brightmoon Sword Art, and I looked like someone who had practiced it for a long time.

Mastering a new technique that was not mine gave me some new insights. The biggest insight I gained was that I had become too stagnant. Since I stood at the peak of the martial world for so long, there was bound to be complacency, but I didn't expect that I'd become complacent to this degree. In my previous life there was no one who could stop my sword, so I stopped practicing.

However, after mastering this sword art, I realized that something greater. I realized that in my generation, I may have been the strongest; but in the next generation, or future generations, there might be someone who was able to contend against me.

After reaching the apex, I became so blinded in fighting those in front of me that I couldn't think about the big picture. I should have looked into the future, but I was stuck in the present. Maybe that was the reason why I couldn't achieve the Spirit Sword State.

Maybe this was why I never realized that the Spirit Sword State was a state that traverses through Time and Era.

Kwang Du didn't fail me. On the morning of the fourth day, he entered the inn and came to my side with a big grin. However, I never expected him to come back looking like someone from Kang Ho. He had on martial artist robes, a sword on his side, a straw hat and straw coat.

He sat across from me naturally, as if he had some business with me.

“Sae Hae Dong Do they say. Why don't we share a drink, since this is a fated meeting? Didn't you say that Sae Hae Dong Do was dog shit?”

“Is it really that fun?”

As I teased him he let out a deep breath while taking off his straw hat and coat.

“Is it fun? I was so scared I neared died.”

“So how did it go?”

Kwang Du said in a low voice, “Have you heard of Hyul Gun?”

“Hyul Gun?”

This was a name that I had never heard of before, so I shook my head and asked him, “What kind of person is he?”

“I don’t know the full details, but it’s the name of a person who is gathering mercenaries for Yang Gi Chul.”

“Mercenaries?”

“Yes it seems as if they have already gathered few dozen people. I’m certain they are planning to attack us.”

“How are you so certain?”

“Because, while gathering information about these mercenaries, I heard some spreading rumors about you and Yang Gi Kang. They talked about how Yang Gi Kang got hurt after trying to prevent you from raping a girl.”

“I’m sure everyone will believe that, since that was my usual behavior.”

“But how do you know everyone will believe this ridiculous rumor? You never stooped down to that level of raping girls.”

“There are bound to be ridiculous rumors.”

“Why are you so relaxed? Aren’t you mad?”

“I am very angry, but getting angry over this won’t solve anything. Also, if it gets found out that those ridiculous rumors were false, then won’t my image vastly improve?”

“But that’s later.”

“Don’t worry, time will fly.”

“You sound really old when you say these kinds of things.”

I gave him a smile.

“So how did you get this information? Did you infiltrate their headquarter dressed as a mercenary? Shouldn’t that have been very dangerous?”

“No.”

“No?”

“The part about the gathering of mercenaries I discovered later.”

“Then how did you do it?”

“I learned about it through the one of the Yang Clan’s servants.

One of their maids came to me and told me. As you know, I am very popular amongst the maids, and I understand how they feel.”

“HAHA.”

I laughed at him. He solved this problem in his own unique way.

“I was lucky, because there is a rumor going around amongst the maids and servants about the Yang clan. The story is Yang Gi Kang killed one of the maids. This made a lot of the servants be distrustful of the Yang Clan.”

Luck was a very important factor in a person’s life. Without luck, even if you have everything planned, you won’t get the result that you want.

“I was able get the information through them. Then I bought these clothes to infiltrate through their ranks. But I am sorry young master, I couldn’t do it in the end because I got scared.”

It goes without saying that my intuition was correct. Kwang Du knows how to deal with these situations, and has natural instinct for dangerous situations. It would have been a waste to let him rot in our house just tending the yard.

“At first I was scared and nervous, but as I got more into it I felt excited. I think this was the first time in my life that I felt this excited. But, did I do well young master?”

“You did better than I expected.”

I could see his proud expression, “I also think I realized something.”

“What?”

“That girls fall for this beautiful face.”

This was unexpected, but Kwang Du did have a pretty good outward appearance; on top of that he had an innocent heart.

“There are bound to be women who like your type.”

“HOHO, I think someone is jealous.”

“If you think about who I am giving up, I don’t think you can say that.”

“No, you can’t let her go. You won’t meet another girl as beautiful her. Even though her personality is terrible, just bear with it.”

I am sorry to say, but I had no interest in Song Hwa Rin, nor did I have time to date her.

“But shouldn’t we go back right now and tell the Gaju-nim

everything?”

“Nope, we’re not going back.”

“Not going back?”

“We have to wrap up this business.”

Kwang Du looked at me with a frozen expression. I think what I told him gave him quite a shock, but this is the best part about teasing him.

“Did you just say ‘we’? ‘We’ as in, the trash young master of the Byuk Clan and his manservant who just sweeps the yard?”

“Yes, ‘we’ as in the the Young Master who has finally grown up, and his faithful servant who just came back from accomplishing his mission.”

He said after sighing, “Let’s buy an expensive wine, since it might be our last.”

He knew perfectly well how dangerous this could be, but he didn’t try to convince me to give up the idea. I think he had accepted his fate.

There are two types of people in this world when they are put in a dangerous situation. One will back down and flee in the opposite

direction, while the other will face the situation head on. I think Kwang Du is part of the latter group.

This is what I liked about Kwang Du, because I am also the type that faces problems head on.

“So what are we going to do now?”

“If they are gathering mercenaries to attack us... then they want to kill off all the witnesses.”

In Kang Ho, there was one reason for hiring mercenaries: to utterly decimate the other clan. Mercenaries are best at this sort of work, because they don't feel any type of remorse if they are paid the right amount.

“Are you serious?”

I nodded, “When it comes to these matters, I am always serious.”

“What can I do now?”

I smiled and stood up, “All you need to do is wait for me, just as I had waited for you.”

“What are you going to do by yourself?”

I couldn't tell him that, because starting now I will become my past self.

“Hurry up, you bitch!”

Yang Gi Kang's words were full of killing intent. His killing intent was now stronger than how it had been when he was still healthy.

Shaking all over, the maid approached him. She thought of the previous maid who died, and started thinking ‘what if that happens to her?’

She really hated it. Being in this place.

“Should I just rip your mouth off? Do I look funny to you? Yeah, bitch?”

“No, no young master, you don't.”

Crying, she bowed many times as he smacked her.

“Please forgive me young master, I have someone I am engaged to.”

She thought of the man who was engaged to her, his smiling face, how they worked hard to gather enough money to buy a small room.

When the previous maid died, he told her to just quit her job... And she really wanted to. But this was the place that she spent her entire life at. It wasn't easy leaving this place.

“Should I bring him? What, you can't do it since you're engaged?”

“Oh, no.”

The maid raised her head and looked at him.

Yang Gi Kang was full of cruelty. He would do anything to harass this maid.

“Please don't, young master.”

“Then come here and lay down.”

Since Yang Gi Kang was bedridden, his head was full of rage, anger, and revenge.

The maid slowly approached, her face covered in tears.

“Hurry up and do it.”

She lowered her head and said “I'm sorry. I am truly sorry.”

She was about to kiss him, but someone grabbed her mouth.

She couldn't scream because the person closed her mouth naturally. But she could sense that this person wasn't here to harm her, due to how softly this person moved.

Yang Gi Kang opened his eyes and said, "Bitch."

The hand that was covering the maid's mouth moved up to cover her eyes.

The next moment.

Shinng!

With the sound of air being cut, there was another sound.

"Kaaaaaaa!!!"

The maid could figure out what just happened from the smell of blood and the loud noise.

Blood started squirting out everywhere.

Stab!!! Crunch!!!

This time it was a sound of a sword penetrating through the bones.

“UHHHHHAHHH”

Another sound came out.

Stab!!!

Different sounds came out with every cut. This was the first time that the maid realized a person could make so many different sound.

“Kuuuuahhhh.”

With every stab, she could feel the pain that he was experiencing.

“Please...”

Yang Gi Kang finally begged.

“Did you listen to her when she was begging?”

After this person finished talking...

Stab. Stab. Cut. Stab.

The maid heard the sound of the blade piercing the skin. That was truly a gruesome sound. The only reason why she was able to still hold on after hearing these gruesome sounds was because the one that was getting stabbed was Yang Gi Kang.

The screams finally stopped.

Because the stranger still had his hand on her eyes, she wasn't able to see the event that took place. All that she needed to know was Yang Gi Kang was no longer part of this world.

At that time the stranger spoke in such a gentle voice, sharply in contrast to Yang Gi Kang's voice earlier.

“Hey, not all men are like this. There are crazy people like him, but you don't have to say all men are crazy because of one person? So just forget what happened and live happily with your fiancé.”

His words were deeply profound, yet so gentle. Even though it was a youthful voice, she felt as she was receiving advice from her grandfather.

After hearing his words, she passed out. She didn't even know that she passed out, due to how naturally this stranger moved.

He gently laid her on the ground and said, “Don't worry. You won't be harmed because of this, since I will kill all the related people.”

Chapter 12: The Place My Sword Points To (3)

“Please rescind that order, Bangju-Nim; if we attack the Byuk Clan, the repercussion from other Kang Ho-In might be severe.”

The person who was pleading with Yang Gi Chul was Jung Yeo, who was the Vice-Clan Leader of the Yang Clan. He only found out what his Gaju was up to at the last minute.

“Repercussion? Did you just say repercussion?”

“Bangju-Nim.”

“My son nearly died, yet you want me to rescind my order? Who will be angry at who?”

“Young master Yang...”

He couldn't say that Yang Gi Kang deserved it, nor could he say to overlook it.

“Please rescind this order.”

“To be this soft and weak, how shameful!”

“Bangju-Nim.”

Jung Yeo knew that he himself wasn't a righteous person. He was someone who lived between righteousness and dishonor. He overlooked many of the dishonorable things that his Bangju did. But... the thing that he was about to do was going overboard. He believed that unless you were crazy, how can you, for as simple a reason as your son getting beaten up, hire couple of dozen mercenaries to wipe out a clan?

“Please think this through carefully, Vice-Leader.”

This time the person who called out was Hyeol Gun.

What kind of person was Hyeol Gun? He could very easily be described with one sentence: for money, he will kill even his parents and children. Who knew if he had actually killed his first-born son for money a long time ago?

Whenever Yang Gi Chul needed something done immediately, he always called Hyeol Gun. As much as his service cost, that's how well he executed his mission.

Before this they had a secret conversation

-Pay me more. I just learned that they are a pretty famous clan.

-Since when did you consider these things when you killed?

-As I grew older, you could say I have grown wiser.

-Fine. How much more do you want?

-Twenty thousand Nyang.

-It seems wisdom wasn't the only thing you gained. It seems like your greed also grew.

-Don't say anything unnecessary. I am not the type you should joke around with.

In the end, Yang Gi Chul paid twenty thousand Nyang, which was twice the original price. But Hyeol Gun promised that he would take care of everything. Meaning, he would hire decent mercenaries to deal with the Byuk Clan.

They planned on using Byuk Lee Dan as an excuse to execute their revenge. They would make a story about how the husbands of women who Byuk Lee Dan raped hired mercenaries to wipe out the Byuk Clan.

Their plan was to first dirty the name of the Byuk Clan through spreading false rumors about the rape, and how Yang Gi Kang got hurt trying to prevent it. Then they would wipe out the clan with mercenaries, saying the husbands of the women hired them as revenge.

This showed how much power and influence money can buy.

Everything went smooth until the last moment, when Jang Yeo found out. They both knew that he would be against it, so they planned it in secret.

“Why are you pretending to be so upright?”

Jang Yeo replied with ugly expression, “This is none of your business.”

They were both staring at the other, not giving the other even an inch.

To break this atmosphere, Yang Gi Chul said, “You seem really uptight about this.”

“You know for something such as this, we need to execute it as quickly as we can. Wipe them out and move out fast. But as you know, mercenaries don’t have any type of urgency. They will keep pushing it off until someone finds out about our plan. So unless you can give us an answer right now, let’s call this deal off. Of course, I know that we won’t be able to get our payment returned.”

“Don’t worry, we will execute this as planned.”

“The public sentiment will be against the Byuk clan, and if we could take over their area of influence then it will double our power.”

If they could do that, then the investment of just twenty thousand Nyang would have been returned ten, if not a hundred-fold.

“The reason why they have such a large influence in San Dong is not because they have the most practitioners, but because they have people who deeply trust and respects the Gaju of the Byuk Clan.”

Yang Gi Chul showed his nasty colors.

“Are you saying that I don’t have those characteristics?”

“No, that’s not what I meant.”

“Trust? There is no such things as trust in Kang Ho. There are only two things in Kang Ho: the Strong and the Weak. This is where the strong rule and live, while the weak die.”

Jung Yeo didn’t reply. He knew that his master was very ambitious, but he hadn’t known that he was this ambitious.

“If you attack the Byuk Clan, then I will no longer serve you.”

This was his last straw. He had served the Yang Clan faithfully for over twenty years. If it wasn’t for him, the Yang Clan wouldn’t be where it was right now. He believed that by doing this, his

master would stop this madness, but it was of no use.

“You dare say these kinds of things in front of me? Get out of here before I kill you!”

Jung Yeo was flabbergasted. ‘Get out of here before I kill you?’ This was the first time that he felt this bitter. Thinking to himself, ‘Why... what have I been doing with my life? I offered him everything, yet he just spit it back in my face.’

Because he couldn’t stand it anymore, he left.

“I will be disciplining myself until you call me.”

“There can’t be any witnesses from the Byuk Clan.”

“Don’t worry, I will wipe out everyone with the name of Byuk. Not even a single rat will be spared.”

Before Jung Yeo left, he overheard their conversation and made a fist. He really wanted to go back in the room and beat the two of them. But if he did that, he would most likely die.

This was it. As a human being, he couldn’t take any more of this type of treatment. He couldn’t stay too far away, since Yang Gi Chul would most likely call him back after this was over. So he decided to leave before he get humiliated even further.

‘Shit, I really wanted to make Yang Clan the greatest clan.’ He was very bitter about leaving the place that he worked his whole life to build.

As he was leaving the place he sensed great danger. He looked up and saw a youth above him near the ceiling. There was blood on the sword that the youth was carrying.

“Who are you?”

Who else could it be? It was me.

Jung Yeo instinctively grabbed the hilt of his sword.

“Are you going to act as a fool until the end?”

After hearing my words, he stopped.

“I said, do you want to spend your last moments defending those fools?”

Great silence divided us, so I overwhelmed him with my fighting intent.

He still didn’t recognize me. Let’s just say that he might have seen me at least once, but ever since I changed, he wouldn’t be able to know who it was.

“Did you get into Kang Ho to serve people such as him?”

His eyes wavered for a second. Then I jumped down from the ceiling.

He was surprised by my footwork. This was something that I could show regardless of my condition. I showed him a tiny bit of my footwork, and he was skilled enough to see it. Meaning he was a pretty adept martial artist.

Then his sight went towards the gate. All the guards who had been guarding the gate were lying on the floor.

“Did you kill them all?”

I shook my head. No, I just put them to sleep, that’s all.

“Just wait here. Your life will change in the next few moments.”

I didn’t wait for his response as I entered the door. He might have different thoughts racing through his head, but in the end, I knew he would wait there patiently. If not he would have already raised his blade against me.

When I entered the room, Yang Gi Chul and Hyeol Gun were surprised.

“You are?”

Yang Gi Chul recognized me first. No matter how dark it may be, he couldn't forget the face of the one who nearly beat his son to death.

“Yes, it is I.”

“It is I? What kind of attitude it that, punk?” Yang Gi Chul stared at me coldly.

“What kind of person are you? Where are your manners!? Ordering to eliminate the clan of the person that you once called brother.”

It seems like I had hit a nerve. Yang Gi Chul couldn't respond. But in return, he spread his killing intent throughout the room. He was very careful, not acting rashly since he couldn't figure out how I made my way all the way to this room.

Then he said to Hyeol Gun, “Eliminate him.”

This showed that he was someone who always placed himself first. Then he placed some distance between us.

Could I kill them with just five-years worth of energy and a body that had not been trained?

My answer was yes.

It would be hard, but possible. If I wasn't confident in killing them, I wouldn't have been here in the first place. So, I was confident in killing them.

If we fought with our ki, or if they prolonged the fight then I would have been in a disadvantageous situation, but I wasn't planning on letting them do as they please.

The only advantage that I had against them was that they didn't know much about me.

I could tell from the last time when Yang Gi Chul visited our house that he was very rusty in his martial arts.

If he truly was the greatest martial artist in the city, it would have been difficult, but he was just the head of the biggest clan. There was a big difference between the two.

I wonder when was the last time he truly experienced a life or death situation? One year ago? Two? Maybe ten? The bigger the clan, the less likely the head of the clan would actually get into a fight.

The one who I was more worried about was the person named Hyeol Gun.

Hyeol Gun was showing his true nature

“Add five thousand Nyang to my payment.”

“Are you crazy? He is one of the people that you have to kill.”

“But not here.”

“Isn’t it too much to charge five thousand Nyang for one child?”

“Then why don’t you take care of him? What, you can’t take care of one punk?”

Hyeol Gun just crossed his arms and stepped back.

“Son of a...”

Yang Gi Chul stared back at me. Even he knew that he couldn’t deal with me himself. He didn’t know anything about me, so he didn’t want to risk his life.

“Fine. I will give you five thousand Nyang.”

Hyeol Gun stepped forward with a big grin on his face.

“Thanks, you little punk.”

He wasn’t very cautious of me, because his instinct that had been sharpened as a mercenary told him that I was no threat to him. But

he wasn't the only one not being wary, I was also not very wary of him.

I grew more and more excited, since this was going to be my first real fight since my rebirth.

His weapon of choice was a cudgel.

Swing. Swing.

He swung the cudgel short and fast two times to vital areas.

Clang. Clang.

The cudgel is a short, but a very blunt weapon. Getting directly hit by it will at the very least break a couple of bones.

The cudgel barely missed my shoulder. Byuk Lee Dan was definitely slow. If I couldn't dodge his attacks, then I would be finished. The one that had been fighting was not Byuk Lee Dan, but my past self.

Feeling pressured under the threat of getting killed, my fighting spirit rushed forth and overwhelmed me.

Ping!

This time my head almost got busted open.

Even though my life was in danger, I got excited over this fight, since I couldn't remember when I last fought.

I was someone that really loved fighting. Because I was this type of person, I was able to ascend to become the Strongest Under Heaven. But in my final years, I was truly bored, since I never had any chance to engage in a true fight.

Bang! Ping!

Everything inside the room was getting destroyed one by one.

Yang Gi Chul was making an ugly face seeing that I was getting pressured into a corner. He regretting paying Hyeol Gun Five Thousand Nyang, because if he knew that it was this easy, then he would have dirtied his hand.

Hyeol Gun paused his attack.

“You little rat! Is running all that you can do?”

He was saying this with overconfidence, since he was certain that he would be able to kill me with ease. But his overconfidence was a trap that I had set up.

In that split second, my sword slashed at Hyeol Gun.

Shiiing! Slash!

These were two different sounds that my sword created after slashing the air.

Chop.

Part of Hyeol Gun's clothes fell down, revealing a red mark.

Drop.

Now the other part of the clothing came off, revealing a cross mark across his chest.

I stood to the side.

Splash.

Blood started rushing out of his wounds.

This was the first sword technique of my Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art, the Unwavering Sword Technique.

Normally his body should have been cut to pieces, but since I only used three years' worth of my energy, this was the limit of my current power.

After spilling large amount of blood, Hyeol Gun finally collapsed.

Boom.

Before he hit the floor he was already dead.

Then I stared at the place where I spent the remainder of my energy.

Yang Gi Chul looked at Hyeol Gun with surprise. But, after feeling that his chest was getting hotter, he quickly looked down. The blood that was gushing out of him was dying his clothes red. Inside of his clothes was a swirling hole around his chest area. This was my second sword technique of my Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art, the Life-Devouring Sword Technique.

I divided my five years of internal energy into these two attacks, three for Hyeol gun and two for Yang Gi Chul. So currently, I had no energy left in my dantian until I could fill it back up using my cultivation technique.

Rather than taking this chance to attack me, he was too busy trying to preserve himself.

Yang Gi Chul was coughing up bright red blood.

He never expected me to attack him, since I was getting

pressured by Hyeol Gun. But even if he was prepared, it wasn't something that he could have dodged easily. If he hadn't tilted his body instinctively he would have already been dead.

He was coughing up more blood and said "... live, let me live."

Chapter 13: The Place My Sword Points To

(4)

I wiped the blood off my blade and picked up the cudgel.

Although Yang Gi Chul received a critical injury, he was still able to talk. "...So this is how you deal with Hyeol Gun and the Yang Clan."

"Not the entire Yang Clan, but just you. I'm going to say Hyeol Gun ran off after killing you."

Yang Gi Chul looked at me with a sorrowful look. "If you let me live... I will do anything."

I just kept walking as if I didn't hear anything.

He barely clung onto a wall as he said, "Wait... Please! Wait!" He quickly pressed some mechanism which opened his safe. "If you let me live, I will give everything to you."

"Making conditions. Ha, it seems that you still think you are in the position to make conditions!"

I slowly approached him raised the cudgel.

It is said that the more one is pressured, the more one will open his safe. He didn't even have the chance to make a deal with me,

yet he ended up opening his safe for me. Someone like him, who only thought about himself, would do at anything to preserve his life. So even if he tried to make a deal with me I wouldn't budge. His safe was fully stacked with banknotes and gold.

On the wall Yang Gi Chul said with all of his energy, "There are over thirty thousand Nyang here. So please...!"

I stared at him with cold eyes. "Didn't you say before that there are only two type of people in Kang Ho? The strong and the weak. It's where the strong rule, while the weak die."

"Today you are that weak one."

Smack!

I brought down the cudgel to his head. With a loud smack, there was a sound of bones cracking. I am not a merciful person. I will not allow the person who threatened my family to live.

Smack!

This time I smacked towards his chest. His ribcage collapsed, showing the results of my attack. Then I went to deal with Hyeol Gun. Because I couldn't leave any hint of my work, I had to properly take care of this.

As I expected, Jung Yeo was standing outside throughout the fight.

“Come in.” He carefully came in and looked around, half surprised. He was only half surprised because he had somewhat expected this to happen.

I put everything from the safe in a bag and slung it across my back. “Hyeol Gun left with all the money after killing your Bangju and his son.”

Jung Yeo looked at the corpse and swallowed his saliva. I was certain that he would take care of the corpses and the story, not because he was scared, but because of what I was about to say.

“Now, you are the Yang Clan’s Gaju.”

When I came back to the inn with my bag full of banknotes and gold, I saw Kwang Du mindlessly sitting at one of the tables. After staring at me blankly for a second, he quickly got up and went towards the latrine. I was expecting him to rush towards me and greet me with a smile, but he left without saying anything.

Then one of the waiter said “Please wait. That’s his first meal after you left. He has been sitting at that table without sleeping, waiting for your return.”

When I looked back at the where Kwang Du was sitting I saw that he ordered the cheapest food so that he could save money. So I decided to order some more food that Kwang Du might like.

Soon after, Kwang Du returned to the table with red eyes. It seemed that after seeing me return, he couldn't hold back his tears and let his emotion overtake him.

“One more bowl of rice!” Even though I wasn't hungry I still ordered it for Kwang Du, since he wouldn't be able to eat by himself.

“How can you swallow your food after sending your young master to the lion's den?”

“If you don't eat properly you can get heartburn. And young master, why are you joking with me, saying that I sent you to the lion's den?”

“I'm hungry, so let's just eat.”

We emptied our plates as the new dishes came out.

Kwang Du said after rubbing his full stomach, “It's good.”

“Is it?” What he said was true, there was nothing better than living like this. Being able to eat in comfort until you are full. When I saw someone take some Nyang out of their pouch I thought, ‘Being able to eat like this will satisfy most people, but for someone like Yang Gi Chul, his wild ambition made him lose everything.’

“It's not true, right?”

“What’s not true?”

“There are some rumors going around that Hyeol Gun killed Lord Yang and took off with his money. Some of the other martial artists that came by said this, young master.”

“Oh, so something like that happened?”

“It’s something that you did, right young master?”

“Didn’t you say Hyeol Gun did it?”

“Yes? Of course, it couldn’t have been you. How can you, young master, have defeated Hyeol Gun, the mercenary who have even killed Yang GI Chul, his employer? The fate was on our side this time, right young master? But... something seems.... This is something that couldn’t have happened by chance. What did you do?”

“I did say I was going to kill them.”

“Oh my god!” Kwang Du covered his mouth looking flabbergasted. “You did it personally?!?”

“Yes, with my own hand.”

“Then all things that Hyeol Gun stole... You stole them, right?”

“Stole? It’s our compensation.”

“Compensation?”

“Compensation for threatening my father and mother, you and me, and all of our Clan members. After destroying our Clan, he planned on looting everything we had. He had a very sinister heart. So, I took all of his treasure from him.”

I truly wanted to rob him of everything down to his silver spoon and chopsticks, but that wasn’t physically possible. So, I just took everything that I could possibly carry. “How much did you take? No, don’t tell me. I don’t want to know.”

“Why? Aren’t you curious?”

“No! I don’t want to know! I’m scared. They say curiosity killed the cat.”

“Ho. Ho. Ho.”

“Please don’t laugh like that, it’s scaring me!”

If I were to exchange everything I took from him, it would come out to be about thirty thousand Nyang. Had I stayed longer and took more things from them, I could have made more; but I didn’t. The only thing that was in my mind was leaving the premise as

cleanly as possible. If I was greedier and stayed longer, my identity could have been exposed and there could have been repercussions.

Before I left, Jung Yeo most likely figured out that I was the Young Master of the Byuk Clan, but he couldn't raise his hand against me because he was afraid of me. Of all the people that he knew, there wasn't anyone who could deal with both Hyeol Gun and Yang Gi Chul at the same time.

He assumed that I was a sleeping dragon who was hiding his martial arts, so he swore his loyalty to me. But I wasn't so stupid as to fully trust his loyalty. I was just going to use him while keeping him at an arm's distance. Since he was involved with everything, he wouldn't tell the truth regarding this matter.

Kwang Du asked me with a shaking voice, "Did you really kill Yang Gi Kang as well?"

I nodded and Kwang Du's face darkened. "Why, do you feel pity for him?"

"But he was still so young."

"He isn't a child anymore; he was already twenty. But, what does that matter to me? Whether you are old or young, if you do something that deserves death then I will show no mercy."

Not counting the time that he tried to kill me, he still did many things that were deserving of death.

“Even so.” This was what I liked about Kwang Du. He was very innocent. Even though we lived in a world where kindness can become weakness and innocence can become ignorance, he still held these traits. That’s what I liked about him.

“I didn’t kill him because of you. He wanted to kill me the other day. I just paid him back with interest.” I said this so that he wouldn’t blame himself.

“Come follow me for a bit.” I took Kwang Du deep inside the forest where there was no one around.

Looking around the forest he asked me, “Is this where I say my last words?”

“If it is?”

“Thank You for everything, young master.”

“Why are you thanking the person who is trying to kill you?”

“Even so.” Even though he said it jokingly, he truly meant it. Even if he were to die right now, he would be thankful.

“Hey, Kwang Du.”

“Yes, young master?”

“I going to start teaching you martial arts.”

His face was full of surprise and worry. This was the first time since we met that he gave this this kind of expression. “Not some fake martial arts, but the real deal.”

“You are saying this truthfully, right?”

“Yes, from the bottom of my heart.”

“Is it your personal technique? The Brightmoon...”

“No what you will learn is going to be something different. This is something that you can learn easily.”

After hesitating for a second, “Even if I wanted to learn young master, isn’t it too late for me to learn? I am already twenty five this year.”

“You don’t have to worry about a thing.”

Even though he was too old to learn martial arts, the person who was going to teach him was me. Although he was a bit too old to start, this was something I could easily compensate for.

“Answer me after giving it some thought. This is something that will change your future and your whole life. Will you learn martial

arts from me?”

He replied rather quickly, “Yes, I will learn it.”

“Can I ask you why you want to learn?”

“It’s because of you. After that incident, you have changed, and after this ... I don’t know ... but I felt like I wanted to change as well. I want to change like you.”

“Let me ask you one more question.”

“Yes, young master?”

“Why are you treating me so well, even after all the things that I have done?”

“Because of what happened in the past.”

“What?”

“When you were little, you were a good person. Especially to me. This was something that happened in the past. When I was fifteen and you were ten, I became very sick. I was burning up with fever and lost consciousness. When I regained my consciousness, I saw you taking care of me. I still remember your worried face. That was the first and the only time in my life that someone worried about me that much.”

“You’re so foolish. Still living in the past.”

“Even though it might be something that might have happened in the past for you, but for me, it was an event that I will never forget.” Kwang Du gave me a bright smile.

So someone as trash as Byuk Lee Dan had a past like this. I was quite baffled.

“So what is the martial arts that I am going to learn?”

Living as the Strongest Under Heaven and as the Alliance master for the majority of my life, I had known quite a few good martial arts. The one that chose for Kwang Du was “Seven Techniques of the Northern Sea.”

“Seven Techniques of the Northern Sea!” He repeated it a couple of times.

I chose this martial art because it was an easy to master, and there were many who practiced this martial art, so it was less likely for him to get into a troublesome situation.

“You have to memorize everything that I teach you.” First I taught the breathing technique related to the Seven Techniques of the Northern Sea. Kwang Du was definitely smart. After telling him a couple of times, he was able to perfectly memorize it.

“Pretty smart.”

“Ehhh, this is nothing.” He was showing a small smile with pride.

Then I taught him about the Dantian, meridian and profound veins. How they are related and how to circulate ki throughout his body. He was able to understand everything that I taught him with ease.

“You need to first practice your breathing and cultivation technique. It will take at least ten days to be able to fully control your ki. I’ll tell you the basics afterwards.”

I was excited and nervous, since I had never reared a disciple in my previous life. So he was going to be my first disciple.

“You can’t become an expert overnight.”

“Of course not, young master. Cleaning the yard also requires practice.”

“How do you feel right now?”

“I feel really good. I feel like I can fly.”

“Never forget this feeling. Never forget how you feel at this very moment.”

Saying this, I was reminiscing about the past and the time that I first learned martial arts. Even though it was such a long time ago, I still vividly remembered the past.

It is said teaching is also part of learning. By teaching others, you are able to look back and realize your shortcomings, and are able to learn from it. So, I was curious what I was going to learn from teaching Kwang Du.

“But I have a question, young master. When and how did you learn this martial art?”

“It was by chance.”

He looked at me with a face full of questions. He truly wanted to ask me what, how, when and where. Forget it, you fool. Compared to the things that you will face in the future, this is nothing.

“You are no longer my servant, but my subordinate.”

Kwang Du looked at me funny. “I guess I am your right-hand man now.”

“You could... or you could be my pinky.”

“No, I will become your right hand. No matter how hard it is, I will become your right hand. I must be there by your side

wherever you go.” Then he bowed to me.

“Don’t they say when the disciple greets his master they bow like this?”

“Alright. I will receive your bow.”

I didn’t have any thought of taking him as my personal disciple. All that I was going to do was lead him in the right direction and give him pointers since he was my subordinate. But I received the bow gratefully.

Through this even I achieved three things. I took care of the Yang Clan. I was able to earn some money and was able to gain a proud and loyal subordinate.

“Let’s go home now.”

Chapter 14: The Owner Of Elixir Already Exist(1)

When we arrived home, the news about the Yang Clan had already spread.

“I find it hard to believe.” It seemed as if my father was disappointed to learn that Yang Gi Chul hired mercenaries to deal with our family. No matter how badly his son got beaten up, my father never thought Yang Gi Chul would be so shameless as to hire mercenaries.

“He is someone who was more sinister than we thought. If he didn’t clash with this man Hyeol Gun, we could have been in major trouble.”

My father only nodded to what I was said, but mother couldn’t hold back her excitement.

“I think the heavens are on our side! I am relieved that were able to pass this tribulation unscathed.”

“Yes mother!”

Then father said, “But still we have to pay back our debt to the Yang Clan.”

“Yes.”

Since I knew that my father, who was a righteous and honorable man, would come out like this, I already told the new Bangju of the Yang Clan, Jung Yeo, to forget the debt that the Byuk Clan owes to the Yang Clan. I told him to make up a story about how the Yang Clan will forget the debt owned by the Byuk Clan as an apology for hiring the mercenaries against the Byuk Clan.

“Also, here you go father, I have read it well.” I returned the Brightmoon Sword Art manual back to father.

“So how was your training?”

“I made some improvement.”

“That’s good.”

I was out training for only a couple of days, so my father wasn’t expecting great improvements. He was just satisfied by the fact that I had changed.

My mother looked at me with a smile. “Son.”

“Yes mother?”

“Are you alright?” It was a short question, but full of meaning. She was happy, but still worried about my changes.

“Of course mother, I have never been better.”

“All right.”

“I will excuse myself for now.”

As I was about to leave I turned around and said to father, “Father ... I hope you don’t worry too much about this.”

Because he received some comforting words from his son, my father’s face became full of surprise and emotion. However, the person who was really surprised was me. This was the first time that I said the word father.

There was no such thing as father in my past life. I was raised by my single mother, so I never said nor thought about the word father.

“Go and get some rest.”

“Yes father.”

It wasn’t hard to say after saying it the first time.

And so, my life returned to normal.

There were two major tasks in front of me. One was protecting

my Clan, while the other was protecting myself. So, I decided to start with the easier task.

The next day I went to find Seo Jung.

After dismissing everyone from the Sword Hall, Seo Jung came out and faced me with a questionable look.

“What do you want?”

His stare had become softer than before. I think my recent actions made him see me in a new light, especially after the incident with Yang Gi Kang where I rescued Kwang Du.

“Please take this.”

“What is this?”

What I gave him was three thousand Nyang. It was only a fraction of the money that I had gotten from Yang Gi Chul.

With a surprised expression, he looked at me. “Where did you get this?”

“It was something that I have been saving up.”

“What?”

I couldn't avoid his glance. He looked at me suspiciously.

“It was something that I have been saving so that I could give it to a girl that I liked.”

Since I said something that was more like the old me, he became a little less suspicious. Because I took so much money, he must have thought that I was hiding some money somewhere. Even though I wanted to give him more money, I decided to limit it to three thousand.

“Why are you giving me this?”

“With this, I want you to reorganize the Sword Hall and give yourself a raise that you haven't gotten in awhile. Also, invite new members while you're at it.”

Seo Jung wasn't surprised about the fact that I gave him three thousand Nyang, but he was surprised at my request.

“Do you think we are staying here because of the money?”

“I know that you're not. But I can't allow your families to suffer because of money.”

“Why didn't you give it to the Gaju-nim personally?”

“Because I know that you will never accept the money my father gives you.”

Seo Jung frowned because I had read his mind perfectly.

He was someone who was very loyal. Even if my father gave him money to reorganize the Sword Hall, he would find ways to pay off the Clan's debt. He firmly believed that he could operate the Sword Hall all by himself.

“Daeju-nim and the Sword Hall is the clan's pillar. If you and the Sword Hall fall, the clan will be in crisis.”

“What are you saying? The clan's pillar is the Gaju-nim!”

Even though he tried holding it in, his reaction was still surprised. Similar to my parents, Seo Jung was surprised that someone who was trash like me would say something like this.

“Will you accept my request?”

After some time Seo Jung nodded.

“Can you, as the Daeju and as a Martial Artist, promise to me that you will only use this money for the Sword Hall?”

I said this because I was afraid that he might have returned the money back to my father.

“I promise.”

I bowed to him wholeheartedly “Thank you Daeju-nim!”

As I was leaving he called me, “Dan-ah”

“Yes?”

“Thank you.”

I smiled at him. He was someone who was like Kwang Du, I didn't have to say much to him, since he would see the change in my actions.

There was a change in the atmosphere around the Sword Hall. Even though I wasn't part of the Sword Hall, I could still sense the change. Some of the martial artists from the Sword Hall smiled and bowed to me whenever they saw me.

They had all been nervous the last couple of days because of the bout against the Yang Clan, but since they learned that the money they received came from me, they had a change of mood. With a personality like his, Seo Jung was not the type to hide these things.

Since the mood in the Sword Hall got better, it carried over to our house and the mood in the house got more lively.

Even the servants' attitude toward me changed. At first, the servants' attitudes towards me were not so great, because they all believed that the change in my attitude was a precursor to some major trouble. But now they all believe that I had truly changed.

There were even advertisements for recruitment. Even though we might not be able to recruit too many people with three thousand Nyang, it was enough to recruit about twenty new members. Most importantly, with this the morale in our clan went through the roof. The clan was finally lively and full of energy again.

When my mother heard the news, she questioned where I got so much money from. In the end, she could only believe me, since I was acting more mature and responsibly.

The next day my mother got together with other women from different clans near us and held a meeting. One of the maids said that she boasted of everything about me in front of them. She made it clear that the money that I spent on the Sword Hall was the money that I have been saving for the clan, not for some girl.

Although I was taking care of family issues, I didn't get complacent in my physical and martial practice. Through my exhausting training regime, my body started to show some changes. All the soft fat turned into muscle and my body was more vigorous than ever before.

The problem lay within my cultivation. The last three stances of the Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art required greater cultivation. The fourth stance required sixty years of cultivation, the fifth stance required one hundred and twenty years. and the final stance

required one hundred and eighty years worth of energy.

For now, I set the goal of obtaining sixty years of cultivation. Just by being able to use my fourth stance, the Soul Escaping Stance, I would have gained another trump card. Although I knew that I could casually take care of most experts with first three of my sword stances, there could be some unexpected circumstances that would require me to use the fourth stance.

Even though I devoted every moment aside from the time spent sleeping towards cultivating, my Divine Protection Technique was still not enough. It would require, even with the enhanced effect of Divine Protection Technique which allows me to cultivate three times rate of normal cultivator, twenty years of cultivation for me able to use my fourth stance.

There was only one solution to this.

“I must open my eight extraordinary meridians and the twelve principal meridians.”

If I open both these meridians, the rate of my cultivation would double and I would be able to cultivate six time the rate of a normal cultivator, and the time that would require me to cultivate sixty years' worth of energy would go from twenty years down to seven.

But it is impossible to open both my meridians with only five years' worth of energy in my dantian. Instead, it would require me to acquire some profound medicine. By adding in the effectiveness

of the medicine, the fastest that I would be able to reach sixty years' worth of energy would be in two or three years.

At one point in time, medicines were surplus commodities. However, in this age and time, they were a luxurious item. I was only able to reach one hundred and eighty years of energy before my battles against the Demonic Alliances only because I was the Mengju.

I would like to acquire the Ten Thousand-Year-Old Ginseng or the Great Revival Pill, but with my budget I knew acquiring them would be very unlikely. Even finding someone who sells these medicines would be highly unlikely. Even if I found someone who sold it, the cost would be in the millions. So, these items probably wouldn't be sold in the common market.

It was possible to obtain the medicine that I require with only thirty thousand Nyang, but it would be very difficult. All I needed to break through my meridians was a medicine that could fill my dantian with ten years of energy. But since I had no experience buying these medicines, I wasn't very confident with the prices.

Thirty Thousand Nyang.

Could I really buy what I need?

Two days later I entered one of the merchant store in the Jaenam District. This was a store owned by the Black City Merchant Guild.

There was a saying like this in Kang Ho, 'If you can't find the thing that you're looking for in the Black City Merchant Guild, then the thing that you are looking for doesn't exist in Kang Ho.'

This Merchant Guild had everything that someone from Kang Ho might need.

It received its name as the Black City Merchant Guild since they have dealings with the Black Market. But all the products that are shown and sold in their store are all high-quality and reasonably priced product.

Someone who was always watchful of Black City Merchant Guild was Chancellor Kal Sa Ryang. He always had a watchful eye and ear within the Guild, so he was able to obtain a lot of different information. Sometimes the information sold within the Guild was much faster and more accurate than some of the information acquired by someone within the Alliance. Thanks to Chancellor Kal, I learned many things about this Guild, where they are located and how each store is run.

There were three Black City Merchant stores within the city, and the biggest one was in Jae Nam district.

After telling my parents that I was going on a trip for a couple of days, I went straight to Jae Nam district on horseback. I wanted to bring Kwang Du, but decided against it.

When I told one of the workers of the store that I was looking for cultivating medicine, a maid led me inside to a well decorated

room and served me tea. I didn't even think about drinking the tea.

When I was still the Alliance master, many people often asked me this question: 'What's the secret behind staying alive in Kang Ho for so long was?' My answer was always the same. 'Beware of everything.'

You must have a habit of being wary of everything. There was a point in my life where countless assassins tried to kill me. There were truly some skilled assassins. They were all waiting for the day when I made even the slightest mistake.

'You want to live long, never drop your guard even for a second.'

An elderly man dressed in a fancy robe entered the room. Since cultivation medicine was a rare commodity, it wasn't rare for the manager to make the trade.

"I heard that you came to buy cultivation medicine?"

From his atmosphere, I could sense that he was a hidden expert. Even though I couldn't accurately sense my opponent like before, I still had my instinct, which roughly allowed me to tell how strong someone was.

Since this old man was the manager of this store, he must have had some sort of history in his past. Thus, they trusted him with the most important merchandise.

“So what kind do you wish to buy? Pills? Incense? Medicine balls?”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“Are you here on an errand?”

Since I covered my face with a hat, he could only hear my voice. But, even my voice was slightly changed. For transactions like this, staying disguised was the best. When I was still the Alliance Master, there were many occasions where I had to put on disguises. I had learned the art of changing the voice back then, so I had many different voices that I could use. This was one of those voices.

“No.”

“Skilled young lad then. Alright, have you ever been here before?”

“No.”

Even with my short answers, the old man asked me all sorts of questions. I could tell where he was going with this.

In my past life, I used to ask questions like this to figure out my opponent. Since Black City Merchant Guild was somewhat of a

dangerous organization that deals with many people, I couldn't let my guard down. What I learned through this conversation was that this old man has been working at this store for a very long time.

I answered his question without revealing anything to him. Even though my responses were short it seemed as if the old man was very satisfied with my answers.

“It seems you aren't like most of the youngsters these days.”

I didn't reply to his comment. I answered all of his questions so that he would remember me in the back of his mind the next time that I came here to do some business.

“You're in luck. There hasn't been a single cultivation medicine in the past six months, but some just arrived two days ago.”

It seemed cultivation medicines were truly valuable.

“What is it?”

“It's Thousand Year Basho Root.”

The Thousand Year Basho Root! This was something that I needed. It is said its medicinal property would give at the minimum ten and the maximum of fifteen years worth of energy.

“How much is it?”

Chapter 15: The Owner Of Elixir Already Exist(2)

“It will cost Forty four thousand Nyang.”

Shit! I was still lacking fifteen thousand Nyang.

“I don’t know whether you know it or not, but there is a fixed price on every merchandise throughout all of the Black City Merchant Guild stores. If you think you are being swindled, then you can ask the other branches.”

This was a fact that I already knew.

There were two reasons why Black City Merchant Guild grew this big. One was because they will never betray the trust of their customer. Whether it be a selling counterfeit product, revealing secrets about their customers, or trying to swindle their customer, they will never do it. The second reason is because the price for the merchandise is fixed throughout all of the different branches.

Most who buy from the Black City Guild do so because even though the prices might be a bit more than the market price, the quality is guaranteed. This is the reason why Black City Merchant Guild was able to thrive for a long time.

“Even if it’s not to me, it will sell rather quickly, right?”

“Most likely it will.”

If you couldn't buy the profound medicine when it is available, you won't be able to buy it for a couple of months, if not years. What this old man said was true, I was lucky to arrive here on the day that the Thousand Year Basho Root was available. But there were some unfortunate circumstances.

“I don't have enough money to buy it today, I guess I must come again another time.”

As I was about to leave the old man asked me, “Why do you wish to buy these profound medicines?”

“So that I could become stronger.”

“To become stronger?”

I had many reasons but this was the first reason that I thought of from the top of my head.

“I have been unfilial to my parents my whole life and have grown up a bit late. So, I wanted to show them filial piety.”

After staring at me for a bit, he started laughing.

“Ha Ha Ha. This is the first time that I heard something so ridiculous.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Because in Kang Ho there is no such thing as filial piety.”

I knew exactly what he meant because I was like that. If you are drunken in your desire to get stronger, you won't be able to see anything around you.

In my past life, I wanted to show filial piety to my mother when I became the Strongest Under Heaven, but fate didn't allow me to do that. My mother passed on before I received my title.

But in this life, things will be different. I will take care of everyone that is close to me.

“I guess I missed my chance to become a filial son.”

“I will give you ten days. If you can get enough money within ten days, then I will sell it to you. Exactly ten days.”

Whether it was because of my actions or because of his remembrance of his own parents, I wouldn't know what changed his heart. But I did know that he gave me this opportunity.

“Thank you for giving me this opportunity.”

“This old man believed that the owner of this profound medicine

already exists. Will you prove to me that you are that person?”

I bowed to him and left the store.

Could I really get fifteen thousand Nyang in ten days?

Even with the change in my actions, there were still some within the Clan that believed that I hadn't truly changed.

“I still don't trust you.”

It was Elder Jong. The financial officer who was treated my injuries when I woke up the other day.

“Could I ask you the reason why you don't trust me?”

“Intuition. It's my intuition. My intuition is saying that you will show your true colors and get into some major trouble.”

This stubborn old man. Rather than doubting me, why don't you trust me for once?

This was exactly how the old weasels who sit on the Murim Council of Elders acts They are all greedy, full of doubt, and stubborn as mules.

Then I said silently to his ear, “Elder, Do you have some money

by any chance?”

He opened his eyes wide and looked at me with a ‘see what did I tell you’ look.

“As long as I am alive, don’t even think about it!”

He marched away grumpy.

As he left I made a small smile. Such a stubborn old man, but he is someone that our clan truly needs. Especially his skills in the art of medicine and in financing money.

Anyway I had a very big problem ahead of me. Three days out of the ten already passed. Time kept going, but I still didn’t have any means of obtaining fifteen thousand Nyang.

There was one solution, which was to go to the Yang Clan and squeeze them dry. But this would make my relationship with Jung Yeo pretty bad. He would think that I am only keeping him to take his money. Even though fifteen thousand Nyang may be a small amount, I didn’t want to lose one of my pawns due to this. I had greater plans for the Yang Clan.

As I was pondering about the present situation, it seemed as if Kwang Du got a scent of it.

“Are you worried about something?”

He was as perceptive as Kal Sa Ryung, but he still had ways to go.

“You want to see Lady Song again, right? Whether you hate her or not, you still want to see her, right?”

“I need some money.”

He made some distance between us.

“Now that we have gotten close, you want to borrow some money from me, right young master?”

“I didn’t say borrow yet.”

“Don’t kid me. How much do you need? All right I can let you borrow up to fifteen Nyang. But you have to promise me to return it.”

“I need fifteen thousand Nyang.”

“What!?!”

“And I need it within seven days.”

Kwang Du just stared at me with a blank expression.

“It is something that I could only gain after being reborn maybe fifteen times. That is without spending money on my irresponsible master who makes me pay for all the food and alcohol.”

Then Kwang Du sat beside me.

“Don’t you have some that you brought back from Yang Clan?”

“It’s not enough.”

“What? Are you trying to buy a garden or something?”

“Buying something more important than that.”

Since I never had to worry about my finances in my previous life, this was the one area where I was the weakest in. I thought it would more beneficiary if there was a younger financial advisor since I could talk him rather than this stubborn old Elder Jong.

“Talking about money reminds me of how you were in the past. Didn’t you get into some major trouble trying to make money? That’s the reason why we owed that debt to the Yang Gi Chul.”

“How did we gain the debt of twenty thousand Nyang?”

“Since you have gotten in so much trouble, Gaju-nim stopped the source of your money. You became a hostage to the man who you were trying to capture, since he had a bounty on his head. Rather

than earning money, you made us lose even more money.”

Byuk Lee Dan have done all sorts of things.

“With Martial Arts as terrible as this, why would I even think of something like that?”

“Because back then you were trying to get the wind of Lady Kong.”

“Lady Kong?”

“Yes, she is the Director from Muriam Alliance Office who is assigned to this Area.”

The Murim Alliance... how long had it been since I had heard that name?

“But, what do you mean I was trying to get the wind of her?”

“You got the wind of the Chivalrous Spirit.”

“Oh really?”

I had a bad feeling about this. Why would someone as esteemed as the Director lower herself to for a little brat.

“How was our family back then?”

“We were at our peak condition then. But after this incident, our influence started to wane.”

“I see. So Lady Kong is the Director of this area. Then who was the person with a bounty on his head?”

“Some bandit named Kwak Do Su. He is quite a character. He would raid anybody who gets in his way, strip them and kill them.”

This was the first time I heard this name. Of course, in my previous life I didn't have the time nor the energy to deal with something as minor as this.

“How high was the bounty on his head?”

“At the time it was five thousand Nyang.”

Five thousand Nyang on his head meant he wasn't some third-rate bandit.

“Isn't it suspicious that he let me go after giving him the ransom?”

“It's because of Lady Kong. She saved your life.”

“How did she save me?”

“Even I don’t know the full details.”

“Did Kwak Do Su request twenty thousand Nyang?”

“No, only fifteen thousand Nyang. The five thousand went to Lady Kong for her service.”

“So she put some money in her pocket.”

“We can’t call it that young master. Gaju-nim gave it to her.”

“My father could have given it to her as appreciation, but she shouldn’t have accepted it.”

With my father’s personality, he wouldn’t have been the one to offer appreciation money to her in the first place. Most likely she requested it from him. After hearing this story I got suspicious of the director. She could be working with this bandit.

Abusing your authority as a director to make money? Abusing the kindness of a parent’s heart to make money? Laughable.

“So have they brought in Kwak Do Su?”

“No, there hasn’t been any news about him, young master.”

Then he looked at me with a surprised look. “Don’t tell me you are trying to catch him.”

“Of course I must catch him. He is someone that I owe that debt of fifteen thousand Nyang to.”

“But it’s too dangerous! He is someone who is known for his cruelty.”

“Then why don’t you lend me everything that you have?”

“I’m sure you are more than capable of capturing him. Didn’t you take care of the business with the Yang Clan?”

“Ha. Ha. Ha.”

Then Kwang Du said with a serious face, “Allow me to go with you. Even though I can’t lend you my money, I can still be of use to you.”

I understood his intention very well. I wanted to take him and make him experience different things, but this matter required urgency.

But I got a feeling that if I solve this problem, then our financial problem will disappear.

“This right arm is still a decoration. So just stay behind and practice your martial arts. Make sure you tell my parents something like I went to secluded training for couple of days.”

As I was leaving the house, my stare became cold. So you two played with my family to gain twenty thousand Nyang. You had better be prepared to feel my wrath.

That evening I arrived at the building that served as the Murim administrative building for this area. Usually small areas have a pretty small building with around fifty workers, and this place was no exception.

I bought some fancy clothes and applied a face-alteration mask.

The face-alteration masks are a very common and popular thing in the Murim world. They can be found in most Murim stores. Face-Alteration Masks don't necessarily have to come from an actual skin of a person. A long time ago, they might have actually used real human skin, but now since skills have improved, they are thing of the past.

In Kang Ho, there is no one who is more informed about face-alteration mask than me. When I was at war against the Demonic Alliance I had to apply face-alteration masks every day to ensure my safety. There were many times when the Demonic Alliance sent multiple assassins on the same day. So, I became the master of disguises for my own safety.

There are four categories of face-alteration masks which are: low

grade, medium grade, high grade and the highest grade. When wearing a low-grade mask, most people will be able to tell whether you are wearing a mask or not. When wearing a medium-grade mask, people with very good eyesight will be able to discern whether you are wearing a mask. For the high-grade, unless you are a master of masks, you won't be able to discern whether someone is wearing a mask, and finally the highest-grade no one could tell whether someone is wearing a mask.

Even though it cost some money, I bought the high-grade mask.

Some might be surprised at the price of the mask, since most face-alteration masks are priced at around thousand Nyang a piece, but face-alteration masks are ordinarily a very expensive item.

Being able to change one's face was something major in Kang Ho. Changing one's face to save your life was priceless. So face masks were valued tools.

On top of buying a high grade face-alteration mask, I changed my voice and my clothes to look like a completely different person. I did all of this so that I could fool these people who swindled my family. I wanted to drag them by their heads and beat them up slowly and painfully, but I knew that I had to do this cleanly.

“Who are you looking for?”

As I entered, I didn't hide my killing intent, to make them believe that I was an expert.

“I am looking for your director.”

One of the Martial Artists became very cautious of me. It seemed like he was intimidated by my pressure.

“Where should I say you are from?”

“Tell her I am from Heavenly Dao Gate.”

He was surprised when I said Heavenly Dao Gate. Heavenly Dao Gate was one of the Five Major Clans of the Central Plain. Of course, this meant that they were the major power within the Kang Ho. Regardless of their status as a major clan, they couldn't do anything in front of me because they knew that if they went out of line, I would crush them like ants. So I suppressed these Five Clans with my fist and ran the Kang Ho with an iron fist.

“Who should I say that you are?”

“Does it matter who I am? Hurry up and lead me to the Director!”

“Please hold on a moment.”

One of the workers quickly went inside.

I knew everything about the Five Major Clans as if it was on top of my hand. The one that I knew the most about and the one that I liked disguising as the most as was the Heavenly Dao Gate.

The reason was simple. The Master of the Heavenly Dao Gate, Ma Bong Gi, was someone who had a very complicated relationship with women. He had over ten wives and over a dozen children. He didn't even know who was who. On top of that, his children were just like their father, making their family even more complicated.

It didn't matter to me how complicated the Heavenly Dao Gate became, since I was able to use their name to disguise myself. I could tell from their movement that my disguise worked.

Pretty soon I entered the office of the Director.

Chapter 16: The Owner Of Elixir Already Exist (3)

‘So they are really lackluster in their duties here.’

By just wearing some fancy clothes and telling the workers that I was from Heavenly Dao Gate, they didn’t even bother to verify my identity and instead let me through. If I were to kill the director here, then she would have died because of her incompetence.

Even if this was a small branch located in a remote area, this was something unacceptable.

The director of this place was Kong Jong. She was the person who Kwang Du called Lady Kong. As a director, she had a pretty decent face and body.

“Welcome sir, you said you are from the Heavenly Dao Gate?”

“Yes I am.”

“May I have your honorable name?”

“Ma Young Cheong. The current head of the family is my uncle.”

Kong Jeong nodded her head.

“Now that I have learned your honorable name, sir, it is truly an honor to have met you.”

Honorable name? What honorable name? This was too hilarious. The real Ma Young Cheong is someone who was stuck in the Heavenly Dao Gate and rarely showed his face to the outside world.

“Please sit down here.” Kong Jeong led me to a chair.

Seeing her actions, I could only sigh. It didn't matter whether I was someone of a higher status than her, she was still the director assigned by the Murim Alliance. On top of that, she acted like this even though my status as Ma Young Cheong was not even a direct successor of the Heavenly Dao Gate. What if someone who is a direct descendant came, would she have kowtowed to them?

I saw her eyes move around and twitch couple of times. Maybe it was because I was wary of her, since she could be colluding with Kwak Do Su. I tried to get rid of any biases towards her, because once you start looking with a prejudice, your judgment will start getting clouded.

We had a short conversation about the alliance and I told her some things about the Heavenly Dao Gate. To her, the things I told her must have sounded believable, since these were things that she didn't know about. So, she asked me various things about the Heavenly Dao Gate and I answered them without hesitation. There was nothing that I didn't know about that clan, so I cleared up misconceptions she had about Heavenly Dao Gate, and she seemed to completely believe that I was from the Heavenly Dao Gate.

Then I asked her the question that I was really here for.

“The reason that I came here was because I had something to ask you.”

“Pray tell.”

“The clan is looking for a man.”

“Who are they looking for?”

“Someone named Kwak Do Su.”

After hearing me say his name I saw a slight change in her look. It wasn't a look of ignorance.

“Why are you looking for this man named Kwak Do Su?”

“Do you know who this man is?”

“Ah, of course. He is a bandit who does all sort of evil deeds, so he has a bounty on his head.”

“Yes, that man. After looking into it, I found that the last time they reported anything about him was from this post. It seemed that you were involved somehow involved in that report.”

“Yes that an incident that happened a while back.”

“So, how stupid was that person?”

“Excuse me?”

“The person who was taken hostage.”

“Oh, him. He is called Byuk Lee Dan and he is the heir of the Byuk Clan.

“So he must have been a fool.”

Kong Jeong gave a small smile. But she made an expression that showed that she couldn't say that about him.

“According to the report, I heard that you were pretty close to him.”

Then she said in a smaller tone, “Well, aren't there times that you just have to share a drink with a fool?”

“Ha ha ha, there are.”

Kong Jeong laughed along with me seeing that her joke made some impact. This lightened the mood.

“Why would someone so esteemed like you, Lord Ma, be looking for someone like Kwak Do Su?”

Seeing that she called me Lord Ma I threw her the bait.

“He committed a grave crime against the clan. Everyone from the clan is looking for him.”

She showed some response. Her face became colder and her eyes widened. It seemed as if she was forcefully suppressing her reaction.

I was certain of my suspicion. There was some sort of relationship between Kwak Do Su and Kong Jong.

If she schemed something with a criminal such as Kwak Do Su to get Byuk Lee Dan taken as a hostage, she wouldn't have any excuse even if they punished her. But, as a director of the the Murim Alliance Branch, scheming with a criminal was something unforgivable. She shouldn't complain even if she received a dog's death.

“What kind of crime did he commit?”

“I can't tell you, since it's a private clan matter. But, I will tell you that this matter is of the utmost importance, since even the elders have made their move. You can see how important this matter is, since I even came here directly without riding in a

carriage.”

Since she could have doubted me, I said these things first.

“Of Course.”

“Since the whole clan is on the move, it’s only a matter of time before he’s caught. I’ll let you in on a secret, I really want to catch him before anyone else from the clan. That way I can show them that I am more capable than those fools who they call themselves heirs of the clans.”

She swallowed her saliva, since there must be a lot of things in her mind.

Then I threw the biggest bait of all.

“Do you want to work for me at the Central Branch Office?”

Her eyes brightened after hearing the words Central Branch. I already knew that many of these directors of small regional offices dreamed of working at the Central Branch.

Working at the Central Branch, as well as having backing from the Heavenly Dao Gate.

Kong Jong’s eyes trembled. “Is this for real?”

“Since I also need someone trustworthy at the Central Branch, I promise to you in the name of Heavenly Dao Gate.”

To avoid suspicion, I got up from my seat and got ready to leave. In times like this, stepping away was the best solution.

“I will await your response. I must know where he is as soon as possible, since we are short on time.”

This was her final test.

If she told me where he was as quickly as possible, then she would have atoned for her crime that much faster.

It was as I had expected. Two days later she came to the inn I was waiting at.

“I found everything you wanted to know.”

She was able to find his location in two days? How was that even possible? Only if Kal Sa Ryung mobilized every able body in the Alliance might this be possible. How was she able to find him this quickly? What would her answer be if I asked her why she hadn't caught him all this time, even though she knew where he was?

She was so blinded in her success that she revealed that she was working with Kwak Do Su. From the beginning, she already knew where Kwak Do Su was. These past two days, she must have been doing a background check on me.

However, there was no way for her to figure out I was imitating Ma Young Cheong because I told her the truth along with the lies. She was going to have hard time sorting everything out, since many of the things I told her were information that aren't readily available to the public.

“So where is he right now?”

“He is at Jae Nam, sir.”

Jae Nam! Excellent, this was where Black City Merchant Guild was. So Kwak Do Su was hiding in an area where there are a lot of people.

“Where in Jae-Nam?”

“I don't know his exact location, sir.”

My face froze. “Are you playing with me? You want me to search the whole city?”

She quickly replied, “No sir, how could I allow you to do that? I know a way to find him. There is something that he really loves.”

“What is that?”

“Gambling. He loves gambling so much that he would even sell

his family for money. If you look through the gambling parlors you will probably find him.”

“So you are certain of this information.”

“Yes sir. He will be at one of the gambling parlors. There are reports saying that all the murders that he committed was to provide gambling money.”

“Alright, I will believe you.”

“Please take a look at this.” She brought me a piece of paper that showed his appearance.

“On his left cheek, he has a peculiar scar, which will help you to find him rather quickly.”

This was true betrayal.

“After I find him, I will help you become the director in one of the Central Branch Offices.”

To make it more believable, I continued, “Although, it might be one of the smaller offices.”

Even if she became a director of a smaller office in the Central Branch, it was a win for her, since she was just a director of this rural side branch office.

“I will serve you faithfully.”

She kowtowed to me right there.

“Make sure you keep this a secret.”

“Of course sir.”

“And what’s the bounty on his head?”

“Five thousand Nyang sir.”

“Twenty thousand Nyang? Oh, not bad.”

I raised the price by fifteen thousand Nyang on purpose.

It seem like she heard me wrong the first time

“It’s not twenty thousand...”

After seeing my cold face, she quickly said, “Yes, it is twenty thousand sir.”

Since she was someone who received bribes before, she understood me right away. For her advancement to the Central

Branch she had to offer at least this much.

She must have this much money hidden somewhere, so I was just taking back the money that she took from my father with interest.

“What kind of payment method do you wish sir? I could sent it to...”

“Give it to me via traceless bank note.”

“Yes sir.”

“Come to Jae Nam with the money in three days. After giving you his useless head, I will head straight for the clan. Wouldn't it be better to finish this business as soon as possible?”

“Yes, of course.”

Then we made arrangements to meet somewhere near the Jae Nam three days from now. If everything went according to plan, I would be able to meet the deadline that the manager gave me.

As I was leaving she gave me a warning.

“Please be careful. He is a crafty one.”

He was someone who would kill a whole family in cold blood for

his gambling addiction. She was someone that worked with him to make dirty money. We would see what happened to the pair of them.

“See you in three days.”

After our conversation, I got on a horse and left for Jae Nam.

This was a new experience for me, since I was always the one giving out orders and not actually doing this sort of stuff. But change is good, since it brings experience and a new atmosphere which allows you to see things in a different light.

As soon as I arrived at Jae Nam, I went into one of the gambling parlors and started looking for him, but there wasn't any sign of Kwak Do Su. There was a high possibility that he was wearing a disguise or face mask just like me.

Since I couldn't find him, I decided to look around for mercenaries who had decent Martial Art skills. However, this gambling parlor was full of people like this. There was no way a gambling addict like him would be in such a small parlor like this.

‘Did Kong Jong fool me?’ Could she have contacted Kwak Do Su after sending me here? But... I knew that she wouldn't do that. She wasn't the type to sacrifice her own life for the sake of others. She would rather betray her ally than be chased for her entire life.

‘That means he is somewhere here.’

Since he was someone who had such a high bounty on his head, he most likely would be in hiding somewhere.

Then something came into my mind.

‘Could it be? Could it exist in this place?’

Kal Sa Ryang reported about these places almost daily. There are many hidden places like this throughout the Kang Ho. There was only one place that he could be at.

The illegal gambling parlors.

Illegal gambling parlors were created because the Murim Alliance kept close watch on all gambling parlors and heavily taxed them to prevent people from going bankrupt. So, to avoid the watchful eyes of the Alliance, illegal gambling parlors were created.

Every year we cracked down on multiple parlors, but we could never get to the root of the problem.

‘I must check it out.’

To gather information, I went into the biggest inn in the place. The reason was that inns are the places that hold the most information. People from all of Kang Ho, like merchants, travelers and mercenaries could be found in a major inn. The ones who

knew the most information were the waiters. As they wait on others, they hear every story and rumor that is happening around the Kang Ho. So in all of Kang Ho, waiters of a major inns were some of the most knowledgeable about current news.

With this in mind, I went around asking for the most senior waiter. Then one youth pointed out an older man. I called out to him. He seemed relatively old and his eyes showed signs of experience. The fastest way to open their mouths was through money.

I put ten Nyang in my hand.

This waiter was relatively surprised. Usually people only gave him one or two Nyang for his services, but I gave him ten Nyang.

“If you can answer my question this will be yours.”

His eyes wavered, since this was a chance that only came once in awhile.

“You can ask me anything.”

“I want to win some money.”

“There are few gambling parlors in the area.”

“But I like the quiet ones.”

His eyes lit up as it seemed he understood me. Of course, working as a waiter in this area for many years, there was no way he wouldn't know what I was talking about. However, he couldn't say things too rashly, since others could get angry at him.

After looking between my hand and my face, he finally said it.

“I know a place for people who like the quiet.”

“Where is it?” I placed the money on his hand.

People usually give the money after receiving the information, but I gave him the money beforehand.

It seems to have been effective. He lowered his voice and said, “Go about ten li south from here and you will find a place called Tasteful Market.”

“Thanks.”

“But you can't just go in there. You need an invitation from someone.”

I got up my seat, saying I understood.

“You don't have to worry about that.”

Chapter 17: The Owner Of Elixir Already Exist (3)

The person who came out of the Tasteful Market was an old man.

“Why have you come here?”

I answered him casually. “What do you think I came here for? I came here to play.”

“You’re a new face.”

“I was introduced by Mr. Kwak.”

“Which Mr. Kwak?”

I put my hand on my cheek and started rubbing it. I was just imitating the scar that Kwak Do Su had on his wanted picture. If this old man didn’t recognize who I was imitating, then Kwak Do Su must have on a disguise or something. At that time, I would say his name and wait for his reaction. If he was here, then his name would most likely work.

The old man smiled and relaxed. “Follow me.”

He led me through the back door of the Tasteful Market. As he led me through, he told me some of the rules which could be summarized in one sentence: If I caused any trouble inside, I most

likely would not be able to come out in one piece.

The Tasteful Market was in a pretty big building with fairly high fences and walls. Every few yards, I could sense someone hiding. If it was me from before, I would not only be able to tell how strong they were, but also be able to tell what they are doing. However, right now I could barely sense they were there.

Without the old man knowing, I was making note of everything from the building, terrain, and even the placement of the hidden guards. I was calculating the most efficient escape route that I could use.

I sensed that the two guards at the entrance seemed decently skilled. One of them held out their hand. "Give me anything that can be considered a weapon."

I gave him the sword that I had. I bought a fake sword beforehand, since I expected this to happen, therefore I had no regret giving this sword away.

Then he checked whether I had any hidden weapon. As he was checking, I sensed that he was using his internal energy sense mine. Everything was resolved fairly smoothly.

One of the benefits of having this body was that since it wasn't fully developed and only had five years' worth of cultivation, I was able to pass security checks this with ease.

The guard said after opening the door, “Go straight in.”

I went through a dark and narrow corridor. If they had the inclination, I was sure they could kill someone without anyone noticing. Without my weapon and with a mediocre martial arts, if I was attacked here I wouldn't even have a chance to retaliate. At the end of the corridor was a door. As expected, there was an expert guarding that door was well. This was a place that could easily afford these people, since they had the money.

When the guard opened the door, there was a grand hallway. The difference between the corridor and the hallways was like heaven and earth. In comparison to the dark and narrow corridor, the hallway was brightly lit and full of life. The hallway had multiple beautiful waiters pouring alcohol, the band playing music, and many people gambling. There were multiple big tables that were laid within ten spaces of each other. There were at least a dozen people to a table.

The atmosphere here was completely different than the one outside. The people here had more expensive and fancy clothes than those outside. These were the people who could not be found on the outside because they were the biggest gambling addicts. They were the people who lived on the thrill of gambling. So they visited this place, since there were no restrictions. They could earn inside, up to ten thousand times what they could earn outside.

I casually walked around looking around at the placement of the tables, the exits and other various things. After locating everything, I started looking for Kwak Do Su.

I found him right away. Even though he had unkempt long hair and a goatee, I knew it was him. He was gambling fearlessly without hiding his scar.

‘Well look at him. Isn’t he fearless?’

But I knew why he was so nonchalant. There were around ten guards posted every few tables and five of them were near Kwak Do Su.

At first it seemed as if they were watching him, but they were actually there to protect him.

Did this bastard set up this gambling parlor or what? On second thought, he probably couldn’t have. If he had, Kong Jong would have told me about it.

It most likely meant that he had some sort of dealing with the owner of this place. Either Kwak Do Su promised to kill someone for the owner or somehow help manage this parlor. So that’s the reason why he could act fearlessly in this place.

So, how should I proceed?

Just kill him and cut down everyone that gets in my way? Killing him wouldn’t be hard, but escaping this place with my life would be very difficult. Some expert could show up, preventing me from making my escape. If this turned into a big fight, some of the bystanders could get involved.

So I put this option in the back of my mind and thought of some other method.

At that moment, someone who was sitting at the table near Kwak Do Su got up, cursing his bad luck. As I looked at him I thought to myself. ‘Someone with good luck in these places couldn’t be a good person; they know when they need to stop.’ Anyway, I took a seat where the man had been seated.

I wasn’t trying to hide my presence. Rather, I wanted to get noticed by others, so as soon as I got to the table I took out everything I had.

“I was prepared to give up my life before coming. So, before someone dies, no one will be able to leave.”

My tone of voice sounded like someone who usually loses everything. Kwak Do Su who was sitting across from me smiled.

“What if you lose your life?”

The other mercenaries who were sitting at the tables started laughing as well.

I wasn’t the one to lose in this so I said it even louder. “Hmph, who says I’m going to lose my life? Let’s play and see who lose their life.”

At this table, rather than using regular flower cards, (花牌) they used the sword cards (劔牌). Rather than matching the pictures in the cards together, [this game matches the famous sword arts and cultivation techniques together.](#)

(Translator Note: In Korea there is a card game called Hwa Tu or go-stop which is like the Korean version of Poker. The objective of this game is to match the most amount of picture together to gain points. The person with the highest point to say “GO” to extend the game or “Stop” to end the game. There are many tricks involved in this game..)

These were the cards that were usually used in Kang Ho-In. But, there were some different cards like saber card (刀牌), the spear card (槍牌), the combination of everything the Mu card (武牌) and even the different sects within the alliance, Alliance cards (盟牌). There were various cards and each had their differences.

Kal Sa Ryang once said to me that one day my Ashura Soul-Chasing Art and Heavenly Protection Cultivation Technique would make its way into these card games. At the time I laughed at the thought of it, but now I was smiling.

I started losing the money that I brought. These mercenaries were very skilled in gambling. The money that I brought, which was three thousand Nyang, may have been a lot in other parlors but here it was nothing. If you weren't lucky, you could have lost everything in almost four or five rounds.

But luckily, I learned how to gamble from the best gambler in the Murim Alliance. Baek Sung Won, who was the Danju of the Blue Dragon Sect, taught me some basic tricks that I could use without

the use of energy.

His tricks helped me here. I lost three rounds and won once. This repeated for some time. Just as I first got here, I didn't hide my presence.

“Man, I can't get the cards that I want.”

One of the person next to me replied, “There are good days and bad days. That's just life.”

Then I made a show. “Hey, Who are you trying to lecture? Say that to your children!”

“Hey Hey, don't get my family involved in this.”

“You old man.” Everyone started laughing, but I knew that they were all pretending as they all had the eyes of a predator.

All of the crimes that Kwak Do Su committed were murder. Even though he was a cold person, in front of a gambling table he acted like a normal person.

About two to three hours passed and I lost about half of the money that I brought; however, their suspicion for me decreased. Kwak Do Su got off his seat, saying that he had to go to the latrine. I stood up with him and said.

“Brother, I’ll go with you. When we come back we can change our seats.”

“Brother? There are no brothers in this table. These are people who are trying to take your money or vice versa.”

I looked around and said, “Ugly SOB, Old SOB, Dumb SOB, ...”

They were all staring at me as I was going around calling them names. Then I got to Kwak Do Su.

“SOB with a scar.”

Then Kwak Do Su said with a troubled face, “Don’t curse at others because you lost some money.”

“Lost some money? Is that all that you can say!?” As I got close to him, one of the guards grabbed me and halted me.

“What are you doing! Let go of me!”

The guard in front of me said, “Take it easy”

“Hey punk! Do you know who I am? I am a regular customer here!”

“I said take it easy.”

He released his killing intent and I took a step back reactively.

“Why don’t you stab me with that sword of yours and take all of my money? Hmph! I can’t stand this!”

I took all of my money from the table and was ready to leave. But, I was certain that they wouldn’t let me go just like this, since I still had money.

“Hey punk! Why are you causing so much trouble for our important guest?”

After saying something to the guard, Kwak Do Su said to me in a friendly face.

“Brother, didn’t you say that you wouldn’t leave until someone died?”

“I don’t want to leave but... people have feelings.”

“Now Now, relax. What do those guards know?”

Kwak Do Su patted my shoulder and grabbed my hand. As he grabbed my hand, he was checking my energy. He relaxed after feeling my energy. At the same time, I was able to see through his energy as well. He was proficient enough see through others energy.

“Didn’t you say you wanted to come with me?”

“No, I am fine brother. Please go by yourself.”

“No, let’s go together. After we come back we can change our seats. Since you aren’t doing well I will change seat with you.”

He grabbed me and dragged me along as I pretended to be dragged.

“Now brother, let’s start fresh after going to the latrine.”

Half an hour later one of the Guards looked back to where the latrine was. Then the supervisor of the guard said, “Aren’t they a bit too late?”

“Send some men over there.”

One of the guard approached the latrine and he caught a scent of blood.

“Shit!”

As he went into the latrine, he saw something that he never thought would happen. There was a headless corpse on the ground.

“So this punk finally got what he deserved after causing all that trouble.”

But as he was inspecting the corpse he shouted.

“This corpse is Mister Kwak.”

“What?” Then the head guard quickly checked the body.

“Where is the punk? Hurry up and find him.”

Some of the guards quickly left the latrine.

“How did he behead him?” This wound couldn’t have been caused by hand. His neck was cut so cleanly. Then one of the guard froze.

“Oh!”

“What’s wrong?”

“Sir, the sword...”

Then the head guard looked down to his side. The sword that he kept for self-defense was gone.

“When ...Oh!”

He suddenly remembered when he stopped him from getting too close to Kwak Do Su. During that short moment of interaction, this punk was able to steal his sword. He was against someone who had great skill, since he was able to take his sword with everyone watching.

Then one of the guard came rushing in.

“Sir the ones who were guarding the backdoor have already been done in. I think he already escaped.”

The head guard said in an angry tone. “Hurry! Send everyone and catch that punk!”

Chapter 18: The Owner Of The Elixir Already Exists(4)

Deep within the forest, there were no signs of life.

Kong Jong looked at the Kwak Do Su's head and swallowed.

“Why are you surprised? Wasn't this to be expected?”

“Haha, of course sir. But didn't he resist?”

“I didn't give him the opportunity to resist.”

“Oh, I understand sir. It is great sir.”

“The money?”

“Here it is sir. Twenty thousand Nyang.”

She handed over the bag that she was carrying. When I opened it, there were twenty thousand Nyang worth of traceless bank notes in it.

“Congratulation on killing the enemy of the clan with your bare hands.”

The normal process was to give out the reward money after a thorough investigation. However, Kong Jong just provided me with the money without investigating. But there was no need for that, since I had provided Kwak Do Su's head.

"I don't need to count it right?"

"Of course not, sir. I checked it twice, sir."

"That's the Director Kong that I like. Make sure you keep it up. Get ready to head out for the Central Branch."

"Thank you sir!"

When she was at the peak of her excitement I told her, "But I heard from Kwan Do Su before he died that you colluded with him."

Kong Jong suddenly became shocked. "No sir, that's a lie."

"Something about collaborating with each other to rob the Byuk Clan."

"No, it's not true, sir." Her voice was trembling.

"That's why I like you."

“What sir?”

“I like the people who scheme a little bit. People who are too honest disgust me. There are times when you have to work with criminals to get things done.”

“Yes sir.” She was confused since I said something she never expected.

“What did you think of him? Say it truthfully. You are someone who meets my standard right now. This is one of your advantages.”

She looked at Kwak Do Su’s head, then at me and made her decision. She wasn’t going to hide it since things had already come to this point.

“It’s true that we worked with each other. However, he was truly a vulgar person. He needed some disciplining.”

“HAHAH. As expected.”

When she started to relax.

Rip.

I took off my face alteration mask.

“Long time no see.”

Kong Jong’s eyes widened in shock. It was the first time in her life that she was so surprised.

“... Aren’t you? You? What are you...?”

I said with a smile on my face, “To discipline someone, don’t I need a scourge? Why did you take the money?”

She trembled a bit and stared at the bag in my shoulder. “My money, give back my money!”

“Of course, you think about the money first.”

She tried to draw her weapon, but I was one step faster since I knew what she was going to do. Like lightning I thrust my hand towards her.

Swoosh! Stab!

It found its mark square on Kong Jong’s throat.

“Kahh.”

Kong Jong grabbed my hand. She knew that she would die when I took out my hand, so to preserve her life she held onto my hand

for dear life.

Then I coldly stared at Kong Jong.

“They chose you to protect the Kang Ho-In, not to do deceitful things like this.”

While this was a matter of personal revenge by Byuk Lee Dan, it was also the divine punishment from me, the Murim Mengju.

Her face was full of confusion as if she couldn't believe what happened. Since I didn't want to have any more conversation with someone like Kong Jong, I quickly pulled out my hand.

Blood started rushing out and she silently collapsed.

I applied the face alteration mask that I had to her face. If they found her corpse, they wouldn't be able to tell that it was Kong Jong. It would be revealed as the person who killed Kwak Do Su. There weren't many who knew the relationship between the two, so most would believe this was as some sort of incident.

There was no way to trace this back to me, so I left the area quickly as her corpse began to lose heat.

Luckily the ten days hasn't passed.

“I had a feeling you would be able to gather enough money. So

you were able to gather that much?”

If I told him how much I had made, he would be in shock.

“I think your parents are blessed with luck.”

The old man laughed, remembering my response to his question of ‘why I wanted to buy the profound medicine.’

“Haha. It’s a good thing, a very good thing.”

“Here is the money.”

I gave him forty four thousand Nyang.

Even though I had few thousand Nyang left over, forty four thousand Nyang was a huge amount of money. For some it was enough for a family to live happily for the rest of their lives. However for Kang Ho-In, it was only worth enough to raise their cultivation by a few years.

For some, buying the profound medicine which raised cultivation by a few years could cost forty thousand Nyang, but for others it might cost them four hundred thousand Nyang.

The old man took the money. Without giving them the money first, you could never get the product that you wanted. Even if you took him hostage and killed him, it would be useless. You wouldn’t

be able to get the thing that you wanted.

After giving them the money, all the traps and ensnaring mechanism were lowered and someone will bring the product to you. This was the reason why Black City Merchant Guild's trading became secure and reliable.

After fifteen minutes, the old man came back with a small box. When he opened it, there was a Thousand Year Bansho Root. It was a high quality one at that.

The old man said with a smile on his face, "What did I tell you? You were lucky."

He closed the box and wrapped it in some cloth before he gave it to me.

"Thank you for keeping it and not selling it to others."

As I was walking out he said, "The owner of the Elixir already exists."

He was smiling because he was correct.

An hour later, I went into one of the caves in the mountain and sat down. I laid the Thousand Year Bansho Root in front of me. It was said if a regular person used it, they would gain health and longevity, while if a martial artist used it, they would be able to gain ten years' worth of cultivation.

But if a normal practitioner was able to get ten years' worth, then I would be able to gain fifteen years' worth of cultivation. This was one of the benefits of cultivating the Divine Protection Technique. Since this was the first time Byuk Lee Dan used this profound medicine, the effect of this medicine would be the maximum fifteen years. If I ate this medicine again, the effect would go down to ten and next time it would be five. Since the body builds resistance to the medicine, there was limit to how effective a certain profound medicine could be. There were also cases where profound medicine could decrease your cultivation speed, since it increased the size of your dantian.

This was the reason why you couldn't casually increase your cultivation with money. Because sooner or later, you might have to spend millions of Nyang to raise even a couple of months' worth of cultivation.

Anyway, the reason why I got this Thousand Year Bansho Root was not to increase my cultivation, but to open my eight extraordinary meridians and the twelve principal meridians.

If I could open both my eight extraordinary meridians and the twelve principal meridians, I would be able to perfectly circulate my internal energy through all of my body, giving me great effects.

Not only would it increase the size of my dantian, it would also help me use the last three stances of the Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art without much backlash. In other words, I would get a stronger five years' worth of cultivation, but it would be more powerful than normal. Thousand Year Bansho Root was the

perfect profound medicine for me to break through my meridians.

However, the problem lay within Byuk Lee Dan's body. Would his body be able to withstand the pressure of forcefully increasing the energy and breaking the meridians? It was a good thing that he was naturally gifted with a tough body.

Attempting to do this by myself was only possible because it was me who was performing it. For others who are within major clans, even with other experts by their side, they had a possibility of dying.

“Please hold on for me.”

I carefully chewed the Thousand Year Bansho Root and swallowed it whole.

After swallowing it, the Thousand Year Bansho Root melted in my throat and quickly gave off its energy. I started madly absorbing the energy.

WOOOOOO.

I didn't waste time in absorbing the energy, since I needed to break through my meridians.

Absorbing the energy was refreshing, like having an intimate relationship with a lover. I absorbed every last bit of energy that the Bansho Root was able to give me.

If I put all of this energy into my dantian, I would have fifteen years' worth of energy. But I didn't directly send it to my dantian. I started to direct it towards my meridians. I didn't want to spend too much time breaking through my meridians.

The first was the eight extraordinary meridians.

Swoosh.

The energy of the Bansho Root started to flow to the meridians.

Break!

I broke through the first Conception Meridian. It was painful, but bearable.

Break! Break!

I broke through the Governing Meridian and the Penetrating Meridian. Thankfully Byuk Lee Dan's body was able to withstand the pressure. Since I spent seventy years circulating the divine protective cultivation technique throughout my meridians, I was confident that I was more knowledgeable than most doctors in this area.

Break! Break! Break! Break!

I broke through the Penetrating Meridian, Girdle Meridian, Yin Linking Meridian, Yang Linking Meridian, the Yin Heel Meridian and Yang Heel meridian without a hitch.

With this momentum, I went on to break through the twelve principal meridians.

Pain followed every time I broke through the meridian, but this sort of pain was enjoyable to me.

Crack!

After breaking through my last meridian, I was able to hear explosions in my head, signaling my breakthrough. Most people would have screamed at this point due to the pain, but I smiled, enjoying the pain.

I was finally able to break through both the eight extraordinary meridians and the twelve-principal meridians. I was certain that no one in Kang Ho would be able to do it as fast and as effectively as me.

As I slowly got up, I checked the status of my body. After breaking through the meridians I was able to tell what changes had occurred in my body. The circulation of my energy became easier and faster, and my body felt much lighter than ever before. Since I didn't have a mirror near me, I wasn't sure, but I was certain that my stare became calmer and more profound.

Then I checked my dantian. With the addition of fifteen years of energy, my dantian had twenty years' worth of energy.

Now Byuk Lee Dan had the same amount of energy as his age. But how could others compare to this? My energy was created with the pure energy of heaven which I cultivated with Divine Protection Technique. With this much energy I would be able to easily kill others.

“Ahhh. Now I can take it easy for a bit.”

Even though I might not be able to use the fourth stance right now, I would be able to achieve it within five years since I broke through all of my meridians.

“Ha Ha Ha.”

I laughed as I left the cave.

When I got out of the cave, I jumped as high as I could. If it was the old me I could have reached the skies, but now I was only able to reach the top of the tree.

Slash.

The sword light slashed through the air. My first sword stance had become incomparably stronger since the time I killed Hyeol Gun. I slashed the other direction and released my second sword stance. This too became incomparably stronger since the time I

killed Yang Gi Chul. If they received my attacks now, they most likely would have been reduced to pieces.

After releasing these two stances, I went on top of a tree. Even though the tree bent, it didn't break. If I broke through the sixty year point, the tree wouldn't even bend.

Although I increased my energy only by fifteen years, it still gave me a lot of excitement. When was the last time I got this sort of excitement? I hoped that it would keep on being exciting. I hoped that this life would be different than the last, so that I could achieve what I wanted to achieve before, the Sword-Heart State.

I was able to see the small squirrel at the bottom of the tree. Ever since opening my meridians, my sight, as well as the senses in my body, became more acute. If I concentrated I would be able to see even the ants.

“One day.”

I casually jumped off the tree and landed softly.

Chapter 19: The Message That My Death Brought (1)

I returned home the next day.

While everyone believed that I went up to train in the mountain, only Kwang Du knew that I went out to get Kwak Do Su.

“You almost made me worry to death, young master.” There were dark circles under his eyes, he probably didn’t get enough sleep because of me.

“I told you not to worry about me.”

“So did you kill him?”

“Of course.” Kwang Du trembled. Hey punk, if you get scared and tremble now, what would happen if you hear the news about the director Kong and how she became missing?

“Anyway how much did you improve on your cultivation? Come show me.”

“Since I was so busy worrying...” Without much confidence in his face Kwang Du sat down and started circulating. I sent my energy into him and checked his progress. It seem he practiced as I taught him

“Good. You did very well.”

“Really? Do you mean it young master?” Kwang Du became very excited. If I complimented him anymore he might have even cried.

“Why are you so happy?”

“This was the first time receiving a compliment from you after learning martial arts.”

“Don’t say useless things.”

“No young master, this is a moment that I cannot forget.”

He reminded me of my head of security Baek Hyo. His joyful expression as we watched the first snowfall. Now that I think about it, the people close to me then and now have these similarities.

“Now I will teach you the basics.”

“What?” Kwang Du was surprised again.

I told him bring some fake swords since he doesn’t own a decent sword. Although I thought about buying him a decent sword, I put that thought in the back of my mind since I wanted to teach him the basics before using a real sword. I taught him the first three basic stances of the Seven Stances of the North Sea.

I didn't have a particular reason for teaching him the first three stances. I thought since he might be bored just practicing the breathing technique, I might as well teach him some techniques to protect himself. But he might get confused if he learned any more than three, so I only taught him three stances.

"I will teach you the other stances after you master these three."

"Thank you, young master."

"Practice every day without sleeping. I will test you."

"What if I die of exhaustion?"

"A lazy person can never die of exhaustion."

"What if I fall into Qigong Deviation?"

"Don't worry, that only happens to smart people."

Kwang Du looked at me with a pout. But, I could tell how happy he was and was certain that he would spend the night training.

Was I worried that he might die due to exhaustion? Of course not. Kwang Du was a smart person. When he went out to gather information from before, I knew that he was smart. He could sense danger and knew how to avoid it. This told me that he would be

able to control himself in his training.

As I was about to leave after teaching him the three stances, Kwang Du said something. “Something about you changed.”

He had quick eyes. He was able to see changes that not even my parents were able to see. “What’s changed?”

“I don’t know...but it seems like you became calmer.” Then after observing my face Kwang Du face lightened.

“Oh! Really? Did you meet a girl when you left? Yes? Did you sleep with her? You slept with her right?”

You punk, I didn’t have a chance to visit the [Gisaeng house](#). I just left after shaking my shoulder once, but then Kwang Du yelled. “You can’t betray Lady Song!”

(Tl: Gisaeng house means prostitute house)

Hey punk, how can I betray her if I don’t have any feelings for her?

“Just focus on your training! And don’t betray yourself.”

The next day the news that I was desperately waiting for finally arrived.

Kwang Du rushed to me and cried out, “Young master!

Something big happened! The Murim Alliance Leader passed away!”

Hearing about my death through a different person made me feel a bit depressed. A month and a half passed since I had died, but they were just now releasing the news of my death. It must mean that they put in a lot of thought behind picking the next Alliance Leader.

They must have had a grand Alliance meeting, where the leader of each sect came and held a long meeting. Picking the next Alliance Leader could influence their position. The only thing that let my heart be at peace was that Kang Ho was at peace. There was no one from within or without that would try to take over the Alliance.

“Really?”

“Why is your reaction like this?”

“What about my reaction? You want me to cry or something?”

“At least be surprised or something.”

“But I am surprised.” You don’t know how surprised I am. I truly didn’t expect to die just like that.

“Right now all of Kang Ho is shaken up. Everyone from Murim-In to common people, they are all talking about the Mengju.

Everyone is at an inn listening and telling stories. Maybe we should go.”

Kwang Du was pulled my arm and I pretended to be pulled by him since I was curious as well. I wanted to know how others would tell the story of my death.

I wanted to know how I was remembered by these people. They say when someone dies, some will be beautifully decorated, others forgotten. I really wanted to know.

Not only the inns but everyone on the streets were talking about my death. “How did he die? Was he poisoned? Was he assassinated?”

“No I heard that he died in his sleep.”

“He must be blessed. He must truly be blessed.”

“Anyway, who do you think the next Alliance master will be?”

“That’s my question as well.”

“I’m very worried. Since different factions will compete for the seat.”

“But is there a good candidate?”

“Of course not. The Strongest Under Heaven held that position for too long.”

“Well, He held that spot for thirty years.” I was a little bit hurt the way they talked about me. Don’t they know how much I sacrificed for these Kang Ho-In? Yet they say those things about me?

They weren’t many talking about my death, but about me as a person. I felt disappointed. I really wanted to smack these people in the back of the head and say ‘Hey punk, do you know how many sleepless nights I had because of you!’

But I thought about it, and it was understandable. Since this was a position that received a lot of curses. They had to curse someone or blame someone to relieve their anger.

‘Go ahead curse me all you want. If it can release your anger, then curse all you want.’

“What kind of person was the Alliance Leader?” The one who asked me this question was someone that I knew best.

“Well...”

“I think he must have a lot of regrets when he died as the Alliance Leader”

“Why do think that?”

“Don’t you think so, young master? Wouldn’t you regret it if you died at the pinnacle? If it was me I wouldn’t be able to die due to my regret!”

Happiness? Was I truly happy?

Everyone was afraid of me. There were many who were loyal enough to put their life on the line for me, but there was a barrier between us. Even with Chancellor Kal I never truly had a deep talk with him.

It is said it is cold at the top of the mountain.

I don’t know if I lived a happy life, but I know that I lived a lonely life.

“Anyway, do you know how they pick the next Alliance Leader?”

I shook my head and replied. “I don’t know.” Even though I knew the answer, I didn’t want to tell him. If the Alliance Leader chose an heir before he died, then the heir would become the next Alliance Leader.

Many people wanted me to take an heir since I was already seventy years old. However, every time they brought it up, it was looked down upon. Since I was so healthy, they couldn’t bring it up too much. But no one expected that I, who was so healthy and my energy reaching the skies, would die so suddenly overnight. So

the Murim wasn't prepared for this.

But since there was no heir, the ten different sect leaders would get together to choose the next candidate. This process would go on until they could decide on the next Alliance Leader. This was how I was chosen. If the previous leader wasn't poisoned by the Demon Alliance, I would have lived as a free Kang Ho-In.

To choose the next leader, more than five leaders must agree to it. When I became the Alliance Leader, all ten of them agreed upon my candidacy due to my skill and power. That was how I became the Leader.

Anyway, the final decision rested with Chancellor Kal. The problem lay within the fact that there was no strong candidates to take my place. So they didn't reveal my death for a month and a half. I was certain that Kal Sa Ryang would be able to pick a great successor.

“Young master, we should give a toast as a sign of respect to the big elder of the Kang Ho.”

Yep, I only have you. “Let's do it, but buy the most expensive alcohol.”

“You have money right?”

“Why don't you buy, since you just became a Kang Ho-In?”

“If you say that, then I can’t really ... Fine, I will buy it.” Kwang Du waved at the owner

“Here! Give us the cheapest wine.” I laughed at Kwang Du.

Thank You for toasting for my death.

Then I slowly turned my head toward the window and stared out. Somewhere far away within the Murim Alliance.

Chancellor Kal, you must pick a great Alliance Leader.

Chapter 20: The Message That My Death Brought (2)

Kal Sa Ryang looked out the window. It was finally the day to announce the death of the Alliance Leader. At first he couldn't believe it. The Alliance Leader that he was talking to just a while ago had suddenly died. He was certain that it was poison. So he immediately called for the godly doctor.

However, the godly doctor couldn't find anything. Which meant that the Alliance leader died a natural death. Even though the Alliance Leader's actions might have been a bit weird the last couple of days, he couldn't believe that it was related to the leader's death. How could the Strongest Under Heaven die such a lame death like this? It was so lame that the tears in his eyes wouldn't even come out. This death was something he couldn't have imagined.

But Kal Sa Ryang didn't have the time to properly mourn for the Mengju's death since his workload were as high as Mt. Tai. He was tasked with the most import thing, which was picking the next Alliance Leader. Even if the Alliance Leader dies, the Alliance must go on.

"We can't postpone the voting anymore." Kal Sa Ryang didn't have anything to say.

After staring out the window for a moment, Kal Sa Ryang turned around and looked at the expert who was drinking tea in front of him. Even though the expert might be holding a tea cup, it looked as if he was holding a blade. That just showed how dangerous he

was.

This expert was one of the sect masters of the ten-major sects.

The ten major sects are divided like this.

There are three sects that are under the direct control of the Mengju, and no one but the Mengju can give them order. The first sect is called the Moonlight Sect , second one is called the Iron Calvary Sect, and the third one is called the Divine Archery Sect . These three sects are called the three pillar sects of the alliance.

The Moonlight Sect consist of experts who specializes in different weapons. It is said that every single one of these experts are hidden experts, and no one but the Mengju knows how many experts there are and what their capabilities are. The expert in front drinking tea was the leader of this Sect, Ju Cheol Ryong.

The Iron Calvary Sect consisted of five hundred experts who clad themselves in armor and rode out on their iron-clad horses. Not only are they expert cavalrymen, they are also expert martial artists; they had the perfect collaboration between martial arts and cavalry.

The Divine Archery Sect don't need much of an explanation, since it is a sect that consists of expert archers from all over Kang Ho. Even though it only consists of the best archers, there are still a thousand members in this sect. Could you imagine what would happen if these thousand experts shot their arrows at the same time?

After these three Pillar Sects, the next seven sects are as follows.

The intelligence sect led by Kal Sa Ryung called the True Heart Sect, the personal security of the Mengju led by Baek Pyo called the Fierce Guard Sect. With over three thousand members, the sect that is in charge of the security of the Murim is called the White Tiger Sect . The Crimson Dragon Sect with over eight thousand personnel, is in charge of personnel management. Aside from this, there is also the Judiciary Sect and the Merchant Sect. And finally, there is the Council of the Elders, where many retired experts go when they no longer wish to fight; it is hard to get in and even harder to stay in. This was how the ten major sects are set up.

Since each sect can nominate a candidate, things became very chaotic quickly. But through rigorous talks, meeting, and bargaining, the next Mengju is chosen.

The one the Kal Sa Ryang had in his mind was the Leader of the Lightning Sword Gate, Yeop Mu Gil. He had a good character and was praised throughout Murim, but most importantly, he was strong. Even though his Clan might be small, what did it matter as long as you were strong?

Kal Sa Ryung believed that others would naturally support his decision, but he didn't expect this last minute change. He believed that out of everyone, the Moonlight Sect would support his decision, but who would have imagined that the Leader of the Moonlight Sect would directly come here and say otherwise.

This expert who was drinking tea nominated someone who didn't have the qualifications to become the Mengju. Even though his female problems were well hidden from others, his character was still questionable. The one that the Moonlight Sect leader nominated was the leader of the Heavenly Dao Gate, Ma Bong Gi.

Kal Sa Ryung postponed the vote, since he didn't have a good feeling about and the other side had six votes. So he postponed the vote as long as he could while trying to bring more people to his side.

However, he failed. Within these last two months of postponing, one person from his side went over to the other side and now they had seven votes. There was nothing more he could do. It was his utter defeat.

But how could this have happened?

Now Kal Sa Ryung was certain. They were preparing this for a long time. He was certain the Mengju was assassinated.

Ma Bong Gi. Was it his doing? But Ma Bong Gi wasn't someone who capable of doing something like this. Or was he wrong?

Was there someone behind the shadows? If there was someone, why did they use Ma Bong Gi? There were others more suitable than him.

This was something that he couldn't figure out.

“It is now time to make a decision.”

Ma Bong Gi was going to become the Mengju if the voting proceeded.

Ju Cheol Ryong showed life-devoting loyalty to the Mengju when he was still alive, but who knew that once the Mengju was gone he would be the one to turn tail?

‘Sa Ryang-Ah, you still have lot to learn.’

Who would have known the pride that he had when he helped unify the Central Plain with the Mengju would make him conceited?

He only saw the superficial things that the Strongest Under Heaven brought, when he brought peace throughout Kang Ho. He became blinded and couldn't see the problems that were happening inside. Murim was getting more corrupt and rotten from the root.

Kal Sa Ryang gave cold laugh, hiding his remorse.

“Although upholding rules and regulations is important, I believe upholding the previous Mengju's wish is also important.”

“The previous Mengju's wish? What do you mean?”

“As you all know, the previous Mengju gave his whole life to bring unity and peace to the Alliance. Especially when the Five Major Clans were causing chaos throughout Kang Ho. All of you know this.”

They all nodded, showing a reluctant face.

Kal Sa Ryang added, “If we vote for someone like him, then aren’t we forgetting what the previous Mengju have done for us?”

But Ju Cheol Ryung didn’t have the thought of backing down. “Yes, you’re right, but we must also uphold the traditions. Don’t you believe it is proper that we do it the right way?”

“I will think about it.”

“If you postpone this any longer, we will vote without you.”

After saying this Ju Cheol Ryung left the room.

Seeing him leave, Kal Sa Ryang gave a long sigh. He was in a hopeless situation where there was nothing he could do, now that two out of the three pillar sects were on the other side.

He turned his attention towards the window, watching people come and go. Everyone was wearing white in memorial for the past Mengju.

Even without the owner, this place was still lively. No, it seemed more lively now that the owner passed away. "...Mengju-nim you can't go like this."

Baek Pyo stood at the middle of the Mengju's Pavillion. This place was empty after the death of the Chunhagin. Baek Pyo walked toward the mural in the wall, which recorded all of the fights that the previous Mengju had been in. The fights were left behind as legends.

Even though he glanced at this mural many times before, this was the first time that he is truly looked at it. Once the new Mengju was chosen, this wall would be taken down and a new one would be placed so that it could record the new history. If that happened, he would have to protect this new Mengju.

But how could he forget the Strongest Under Heaven? After walking through all corners of the room he stood in front of a chair and table. The chair that Mengju usually sat in was empty.

Baek Pyo remembered the smiling face of his master. "Haha, Baek Pyo-ya. Come here and share a drink with me. If you are always uptight like that, you might catch an illness."

"I can sleep in comfort because of you. Thank You. Thank you very much."

"I heard that your wife is sick. Go take care of her for a few days. Ha ha, this is an order. Order from the Mengju."

“You liked the time when we fought like crazy. You remember? I still remember those days. Sorry for making you work hard then. Ha ha ha.” Mengju’s words were still clear in Baek Pyo’s head. Finally he couldn’t hold himself back and tears started dropping from his eyes.

“Mengju-nim!!!” His tears kept on falling. He was feeling guilty for not being able to protect him. He thought that if he paid more attention to the Mengju’s health...

He kept crying. “...I want to see you again...Mengju-nim.”

But there was no reply. Only the sound of his cry.

Chapter 21: The Message That My Death Brought (3)

The next day, I decided to visit the inn once again.

I was curious about the current state of things.

Was it because I was still attached to my previous life? Of course not.

I was completely satisfied with my current life. Rather, I'm both happier and more lively now than I ever was as the Mengju.

I decided that, in this life, I'd help my clan rise up while raising my cultivation. However, there were some faces in the Alliance that I couldn't forget. I was worried that Kal Sa Ryung and Baek Pyo, as well as my other loyal subordinates, would be impacted due to this new installment.

The inn was abuzz with chatter about me. Some cursed the way I governed, but no one was able to say anything negative about my skill as a martial artist.

"I didn't know how he was the Mengju, but as a Martial Artist who was known as the 'Strongest Under the Heavens, he's someone who should be respected by everyone."

One elderly man responded, "I personally saw him fight."

When they heard this, everyone present began to gather near the old man. Even I decided to listen to him.

“Do you all know of the fight between the Mengju and the Evil God?”

“Of course we know of it. We’ve heard stories all about it.”

“Yes, but most of them aren’t true.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because I was there.”

I laughed in silence because everything that this old man had said were lies.

The day that I fought against the Evil God there shouldn't have been anyone present, due to the fact that I had killed the Evil God and his subordinates while I had everyone from the Alliance remain on standby some distance away.

Since this was the period when I was still soaring through the skies of Kang Ho, how could this old man have seen the fight from that sort of distance? If he had been able to, I would’ve been able to sense his presence.

“The Evil God looked monstrous—as if he was born to fight. He was insanely large, reaching a height of almost three metres, and had fists the size of a human’s head. And of course, he was insanely strong too.”

The Evil God was insanely large, with fists the size of a human’s head?

All I could do was laugh silently at what this old man was saying.

When I first saw the Evil God I was surprised.

He had a pretty small stature, reaching only 1.5 metres in height. He even had an innocent face that made him look ill-suited for fighting.

Just because he was an evil god didn’t mean that he was going to simply swing his fists around wildly. He used a small dagger as his weapon of choice.

However, what that old man said wasn’t entirely false; he was indeed insanely strong. At that point in my life he was the strongest opponent that I had fought against.

Of course, I encountered stronger opponents later in life, but he was someone who I would remember, since he was one of the top five fighters that I had ever fought.

I couldn’t remember how many times I almost died to his

dagger, which had only missed my vitals by a hair. He was someone who deserved the title ‘Evil God’.

“I still remember their fight as if it was yesterday, especially the final moments. The Mengju showed the world his godlike skills at that point. As he dodged and countered the Evil God’s fist he soared up into the heavens like a Dragon. That scene was the most memorable moment of my life. “

Everyone was moved after they heard the old man’s story.

“I’m honored. I could die happily if I saw that fight.”

“I want to buy your eyes.”

“Oh sword god!”

Listening to stories like this wasn’t too bad. Hearing a story about how I finally delivered the final blow to the Evil God, I became a bit embarrassed. This only reinforced that I too was a human.

But there was someone among the crowd who looked unsatisfied.

“So what if he’s a Sword God?”

“Oi, watch what you say.”

“Haven’t you heard the rumors?”

“What rumors?”

“The rumor that he received protection fees.”

“Is that true?”

Everyone, including me, was surprised.

I instantly wanted to get up and shout ‘Stop spouting nonsense!’, as I had ever received money in that sort of manner.

“Why wouldn’t he have? He was that strong.”

When I heard the way he was speaking, I could tell that what he was saying was based on his own feelings, not some rumor.

Shit. I really wanted someone to say something against him, but everyone was agreeing and nodding their heads.

“If it’s Mengju... he probably could have...”

“Wasn’t Chunhagin the strongest Mengju?”

“He died without being able to spend all that money....”

I wouldn't mind them spouting other rumours, but this crossed the line.

'It's not true! You fools! If I had really wanted to, I could have, but... So don't spread false rumors!'

"How much do you think he made? A hundred thousand? A million?

I couldn't hold back my sigh.

I truly loved Kang Ho... But I don't know if Kang Ho even knew of my feelings.

Someone with a clear voice suddenly asked, "Can you prove it?"

This voice belonged to someone that I knew.

Everyone looked towards where the voice had come from. Surprisingly, it was Song Hwa Rin.

Out of all these people, she was the one who spoke out against this man.

Everyone was dazed by her beauty.

Some recognized her, but it seemed that the person who had made the false claim didn't know who she was. His only thought was, 'How could such a beautiful woman exist?'

"Do you have any proof that he was extorting money?"

When he heard her question, the man became somewhat nervous

"Are you close to the Mengju?"

"No."

"Then why are you complaining?"

"I just wanted to tell you not to spread false rumours without knowing the true nature of the one that you're talking about."

Her voice was calm yet dangerous.

"Let me ask you again. Do you have any proof of him extorting others?"

"I a.... it's only a rumour that I heard."

"Spreading false rumours about the Mengju is a crime. If I were to tell the Alliance, you could be taken into custody."

The man got scared when he heard her. He had nothing else to say after she said that he could be taken into custody.

“I apologize for rashly speaking.”

Song Hwa Rin quickly sat down at one of the stalls, no longer minding the man.

“Excuse me, I make my order here?”

One of the waitress rushed over to her.

After giving her a final glance, most of the crowd dispersed. They didn't want to cause trouble by staring at her for too long.

While all of this was happening, I sat on my stall with back turned to her so that she couldn't see me. However, I was grateful since she had defended me.

After a while, her dishes came.

“Didn't I only order noodles?”

She was confused when she received a dish with meat alongside her noodles.

The owner replied with a smiling face, “This is a special service

that I'm giving you."

"Why are you treating me like this?"

"Because I think the same thing as you, Lady. I think that the Mengju who passed away was an honorable person. Because of him, we were able to live and prosper without fear. He brought peace to Kang Ho."

"Oh, so that's why. But I'll have to apologize."

She replied with something that took the owner by surprise, "I think you have mistaken me. I don't like the Mengju who passed away at all."

"What?"

The owner's eye became round. What kind of awkward situation was this?

"But didn't you just defend him?"

"I simply don't like people spreading false rumours about others."

Now that I think about it, she hadn't said a thing about whether or not she liked the Mengju.

“In fact, I rather dislike the previous Mengju.”

I decided to ask something.

“Why?”

She turned around to face me. She seemed surprised that I was even here.

“How long have you been here?”

“A long time.”

“Did you follow me?”

I shook the empty wine bottle in front of me.

“I could have. If I knew that you were coming here.”

She understood that I had come here first.

“I heard about the Yang Clan.”

“We were lucky to get out of it without spilling any blood.”

“I’m glad that all of you are alright.”

After our exchange, she turned back around.

I didn't really want to extend our conversation, but I was still curious.

“Why do you hate the previous Mengju?”

This was something that I really wanted to know.

She turned back towards me, but didn't tell me the reason.

Chapter 22: When Spring Arrives At The Crossroad (1)

Kwang Du was in the yard, deeply engrossed in his training.

It seemed that he'd fully mastered the first three stances of the Seven Stances of the North Sea.

I could tell that he had natural talent for martial arts. Even though he might not be considered a genius, it was still almost second nature to him. It might be fate that natural talents follow me, considering that both Kwang Du and Byuk Lee Dan are both natural talents.

Kwang Du didn't even notice me creeping up behind him, he was so focused on his training. Seeing how sweaty he was, I remembered the days when I was just as deeply focused on training; such that I didn't have a clue what was going on around me.

Now that I think about it, what drove me to train like that?

Back then, I wanted to become the strongest. I wanted be the strongest in all of Kang Ho. That's right; desire for strength was what allowed me to become the Strongest Under the Heavens.

If desire is what drove me to who I became, I wonder what's driving Kwang Du?

“Hey punk! Even if ten assassins came and went, you wouldn’t even notice, would you?”

“Huh? When did you get here?”

“I just came by to see if you were fooling around.”

“Were you watching me practice young master?”

Kwang Du asked me. After seeing me nod, he asked, “How did I look young master?”

He was honestly growing at a surprising rate. He was like an innocent child who had a knack for learning martial arts.

I replied with a smile in my face, “Let me teach you the last four stances of the Seven Stances of the North Sea.”

“Oh.” Kwang Du’s face brightened.

As I taught him the last four stances, I made sure to show him the stances step-by-step like before.

How could he know that no one else in Kang Ho had the privilege of learning things as in-depth and profound as he was. It was only because of me that he was able to master the profound technique known as the ‘Seven Stances of the North Sea’ so easily.

“Alright, I’ve finished teaching you the rest of the Seven Stances of the North Sea.”

“Thank you very much, young master.”

“Even if two people use the same martial art, there will be a difference in their strength depending on the person using the martial art. Let me remind you once again: The most important thing about martial arts is always the person that’s using them. Remember this.”

“I will.”

“Now then, start practicing with this sword.”

“Oh! Did you buy it just for me young master?”

“Indeed. I sold the one that you bought a while back.”

On my way back I bought a decent sword from a weapon shop I passed by. Even though it wasn’t the best sword, nor the most expensive one, it was still a good sword.

“Young Master....”

I quickly replied since he looked like he was so moved he was about to start crying. “Anyways, just take out the sword.”

With his hands shaking, Kwang Du unsheathed the sword.

“This sword feels different somehow. Is it because you bought a special sword for me? It feels better than most other swords and sabers that I’ve held before.”

“You punk. You’re just saying that since you don’t know much about swords.”

Divine Sword and Sabers were special. Even if you only held it, you’d be able to feel the difference. Even the creation process was entirely different from regular swords and sabers. Just by grabbing the hilt you’d find a perfect balance. These divine blades have a level sharpness that’s hard to describe, yet is perfectly firm—which makes it seem like there’s nothing that these blades can’t cut. These are the major differences between divine blades and regular ones.

I hope that one day, Kwang Du might have a chance to get his hands on one of these blades.

“First, focus your attention on the hand you’re holding the sword with. As of right now, this sword is more important than the chopsticks you eat your food with.”

“Yes young master.”

“In the beginning, the sword might be scary. However, you must be friendly with it, since it will save both you and your allies’ lives.

Your goal is to become one with the sword.”

“To become one with the sword? What does that mean young master?”

“Do you ever think about your arm during your everyday life?”

“No.”

“It’s just like that. You must become familiar with the sword to the point that it’s akin to a part of your body. The sword must become an extension of your arm.”

“Oh! I understand. Where did you learn something like this young master? I’ve never seen you read any books. Is it something from the Seven Stances of the North Sea?”

“Yes.”

I just answered him with an affirmation. But who was I? I’m the Strongest Under the Heavens.

“I’m leaving. Go train.”

“Yes, young master.”

I turned around, then asked Kwang Du, “Have you ever hated someone before?”

He silently stared at me.

“You punk, not me.”

“Umm... Yang Gi Kang. I hate that guy.”

“Right? You hate him. That’s what it means to hate, right?.”

“Why?”

“Never mind”

“Young master, did someone say that they hated you? Er, actually, I think that’s the wrong question to ask, since everyone already seems to hate you. How much did they say they hate you?”

After saying this, Kwang Du ran away from me.

Seeing me rotate my wrist, wanting to discipline him, he giggled from a distance.

If Kal Sa Ryung and Baek Pyo were to see me like this, they’d probably be in shock from how much I had changed, since they were closest to me. They were one of the only few who I could have

a proper conversation with, since most people were scared of me. When most people came to see me, they put on a different attitude because they were afraid of me.

Was I happy?

At one point I was.

At one point, I felt that this was how I should show my power. That this was my pride. But now that I'm looking back, it feels as if that was unnecessary. How much better it would have been if I'd been able to joke around like this with more people.

Well, there are bound to be regrets in life.

As I was walking away, Kwang Du suddenly said, "I'm sure that once they get to know you more, they will naturally come to like you."

I won't make the same mistake twice.

Song Wu Kyung visited our house.

Since this visit was unexpected, Byuk Do Joon was nervous. This was the first time that Song Wu Kyung had visited like this.

“I just came by to see you.”

“Good. Since you are here, shall we share a few drinks?”

“Sounds good to me.”

Just by seeing their faces, I could tell that they had a close relationship for a long time. Byuk Do Jun was thankful to Song Wu Kyung. When his family had been in crisis, his friend hadn't canceled their engagement. This showed how much of a bond these two shared.

When our family wasn't doing so well, he wanted to lend us some money, but since he wanted to save his friend some face, he didn't mention it. My father was very thankful for this.

They had a friendly conversation as they exchanged drinks.

“Now that the Mengju has passed away, Kang Ho is starting to become chaotic.”

Byuk Do Jun nodded and replied, “It seems so, considering that it was under the control of a single person for so long.”

“Couple of days ago, Ko Soon Kyung visited our house.”

“Ko Soon Kyung?”

Ko Soon Kyung was the owner of the San Dong merchant shop. It was the biggest shop in San Dong.

“What did he say?”

“He proposed that we gather everyone from San Dong and create a San Dong Alliance.”

“A San Dong Alliance?”

Byuk Do Joon was surprised to hear something like this.

“The previous Mengju banned the formation of Alliances.”

The Strongest Under the Heavens had banned the formation of Alliances since it would bring more chaos to Kang Ho; mainly because there would be internal power struggles between different alliances.

“But now the Mengju is gone. Other places have already started creating alliances. We should also make a move before a new Mengju is decided. Even if a new Mengju is decided, his influence won’t be that great immediately.”

This was something that Byuk Do Joon had never thought about. He knew that he wasn’t very good at dealing with political things.

“I’m not saying to create an alliance right now. Right now I just

want to set the groundwork for one. Working with different merchant groups and clans. I came here to get your advice.”

His words showed signs that he had already been somewhat persuaded by Ko Soon Kyung. If he had refused Ko Soon Kyung there was no way that he'd have come all the way here.

My father understood him well.

The most important thing needed to create an alliance was influence and money. Currently, the Song Clan had the most influence in San Dong.

“Although the Yang Clan has the most influence normally, you know that they are still recuperating from their internal strife. Since they're not able to do anything right now, isn't this a great opportunity to become the strongest clan in Sang Dong? Therefor, I need your help.”

He was just showing my father face. Even without our help, the Song clan had enough power and influence to become the strongest in San Dong.

“To tell you the truth, I can't resist the thought of becoming the strongest clan in San Dong.”

“I understand how you feel.”

Everyone has at least some level of desire to become the greatest

power in their respective region. Byuk Do Joon had already risen to this position once.

“I respect your thoughts and want to help you. However, I want to warn you about something. Once you grab hold of their hands, you will experience things that you have never experienced before.”

“I am prepared for that.”

“How long did they give you to make up your mind?”

“They gave me a couple of days to think it over.”

After emptying the wine bottle, Song Wu Kyung added, “Kang Ho is changing by the day.”

Before Song Wu Kyung left, he visited me.

“Have you been well?”

“Yes, I’ve been well sir.”

We were still in an awkward position. Since we hadn’t canceled the engagement, he was still my father-in-law.

“I knew that you were in your rebellious phase.”

“I am ashamed.”

“It’s all right. Everyone goes through this. It’s better that you go through this now, since it will help you grow in the future.”

I was thankful towards him since he was saying these things to me. His actions showed the close relationship held between him and my father. I was quite jealous of their relationship since I had never experienced something like it in my previous life.

“Did you meet Hwa Rin-ee today?”

“Yes, by chance.”

“By chance? Why would you use words like that when you two are engaged.”

“...I apologize.”

“Is what she said that day bothering you that much? Don’t mind what she said too much. She’s just a girl.”

“But you know those were her true feelings.”

“Hey!”

“I think that what Rin-ee said is right. We should at least be able to decide who we want to marry.”

Song Wu Kyung stared at me with a disappointed look. However I didn't mind it too much since I didn't have any thoughts of marrying her. I just didn't want him get his hopes up too high.

“I still won't give up on you.”

He left after saying that. Afterwards, Kwang Du, who'd been waiting outside, came in.

“Why did you say something like that? You should've just said that you will do better in the future.”

“You still want me to be marry Song Hwa Rin?”

“Is that even a question young master?”

“What?”

“‘What’? Haven't I told you many times before? Because she is beautiful. And beside her beauty, she is from a good clan, she is intelligent, and her father also has a lot of face. What other reasons do you need? Since you've been blessed with so much luck, I think that you could be a hero of Kang Ho that's reincarnated.”

Eh? You think that I'm a reincarnated hero of Kang Ho?

"But something important is missing."

"What? Her personality? I think that it's alright. So what if she has some personality issues? I think it's better to marry someone who has some personality issues, since it won't make your life too boring. Just bear with it!"

"But there's no love between us."

Kwang Du seemed pretty surprised.

"We don't love each other."

Kwang Du still looked at me, dazed.

"What, did I say something wrong?"

"No."

"Then why are you looking at me like that"

"I just think that you've really grown up, young master. Just a minute ago, you really... acted like an adult."

I replied with a big smile.

“By the way, what did you come here for?”

Kwang Du said, “Oh, Gaju-nim called you.”

Chapter 23: When Spring Arrives At The Crossroad (2)

My parents were waiting for me in their room.

“Did you call for me, father?”

“Yes, I have something to discuss with you.”

Father proceeded to tell me about the conversation he had with Song Wu Kyung. About how the San Dong Merchants had proposed to Song Wu Kyung that they would support him in the creation of the San Dong Alliance, and how Song Wu Kyung wanted my father’s advice and support.

“Since it pertains to the Song Clan, you should be informed of it.”

I could sense their attitude towards me change. How they were now properly treating me as the heir of the Byuk Clan.

“There’s been a change in the Murim-In of San Dong.”

Although father only mentioned the Murim-In of San Dong, there were changes throughout all of the Central Plains. I hadn’t expected changes to happen this quickly after my death. This just went to show how much of an influence I held in Kang Ho. Either way, I didn’t have any say in this matter, considering I was no longer the Mengju who had banned the formation of Alliances.

Thus, there was no need for me to get mad about the creation of the San Dong Alliance.

I was just worried that Song Wu Kyung would be the leader of the Alliance. After the Alliance gets formed everything would become political. Being the leader of a Clan is completely different than being the leader of an Alliance.

At the same time, I was rather curious as to why the San Dong Merchants had proposed this sort of arrangement, considering the fact that merchants only move when it's beneficial to them. Especially when it comes to working with the Murim-In.

This is something that I'll have to investigate carefully.

“Thank you for letting me know father”

As I was about to leave, my mother called out to me, “Did Lord Song visit you?”

“Yes. He told me not to cancel our engagement.”

Father replied with a helpless expression, “That man...”

At the same time, my mother replied with a smile on her face, “I'm with Lord Song on this.”

As I left, I didn't reply back since I understood how she felt.

The relationship between my parents and I was getting both better and deeper. At first I thought I had to act like their son on ceremony. However, that feeling had disappeared; I feel like I can act naturally around them. I get the feeling now that they're my real parents, so I want to treat them as such.

To be honest... I'm happy; happy to have parents like this.

I am sure my previous mother will understand. Since I am showing filial piety to my parents in her stead.

In the afternoon, someone unexpected came by to visit.

It was Song Hwa Rin. My face showed signs of surprise, since this was truly unexpected.

“It seems that you were surprised.”

“I wasn't expecting your visit.”

“I came here because I have a favor to ask.”

For her to ask me a favor was quite unexpected.

“Can you convince your father to tell my father to decline the offer?”

“Do you really think that my father’s word will be able to change your father’s mind?”

“I don’t know. However, I’m sure that it will have a big influence.”

This wasn’t a bad idea considering the fact that they had a relatively close relationship. It’s said that, if you enter the house of a poor person, your relationship with that person will go out the window. However, it seemed like they both still shared a close relationship.

“Can I ask you why you don’t want your father to take this offer?”

“Because I don’t think that my father’s character is suited for this sort of work.”

“Aren’t you looking down on your father?”

“I think that it’s better to look down on my father than for something terrible to happen.”

I agreed with her. I also didn’t think that Song Wu Kyung was suited to lead an Alliance.

Even though I didn't want to say what I was about to say, I said it anyway, "Didn't the previous Mengju bring peace and stability to the Central Plains? It isn't that bad for him to become the leader of an Alliance at times like this. And won't this make the Song Clan stronger?"

"That's what I'm worried about."

"What?"

"The previous Mengju ruled the Murim with an iron fist. Yes, he created peace and stability. However, that wasn't the only thing he created. He also created something that was hidden."

"What do you mean?"

"He also created hidden resentment."

I didn't have anything to say to her.

"Kang Ho-In have the natural instinct of beating others and rising to the top—we're natural fighters with wild ambition. We're like tigers and wolves, not rabbits and deer."

"So?"

"So, since the previous Mengju ruled and suppressed everyone

with his sheer power, everyone had to hide their true nature. If they showed their true nature they were bound to get crushed. So they suppressed and hid their resentment, all the while wishing for the Mengju to die.”

Listening to her speak, I felt like I’d been punched in the face. I had never thought about it like that before. This was the first time that I’d ever been this shocked.

Had everyone wished for me to die?

She stated everything so clearly.

“I’m scared. What if that hidden resentment explodes towards my father?”

I finally understood why she was against her father leading the alliance. She didn’t want her father to get involved in this affair.

“So that’s the reason you hate the previous Mengju?”

“There’s a bigger reason for why I hate him... but this is part of it.”

A bigger reason?

However, she was begging me.

“Please. Can you fulfill this favor of mine?”

I had a dream for the first time in quite a while.

It was a dream about the past, when I was in a Murim Alliance meeting.

Kal Sa Ryang was there, as well as all the other Sect Leaders, seated around a table.

All of their faces were frozen. These were the people that wouldn't allow a single mistake in either their actions or their words.

So, this is all but a fake face that they'd created to hide their true intention. Yes, behind these faces, they're all hiding their resentment towards me. They're all hoping that I die.

Did they really want me to die?

Suddenly my thoughts spread throughout the room, causing most of the people who were sitting at the table to stand up and stare at me while nodding their head. Their stares was chillingly cold.

The feeling of apprehension that I haven't had in a long time started to creep up on me.

Was I assassinated?

I suddenly woke up from my dream. “Huuuuu....”

This all happened because of what she said.

People are naturally greedy for power, but since I was already in a position of power, I never truly knew what it was like. However, I could imagine what would happen once those feelings were let loose.

Thus, I suppressed everyone with my sheer power. I ruled with an iron fist in order to make it so that they wouldn't be greedy for power. But I hadn't thought about the future. Those emotions that were suppressed. What would happen if those emotions were to explode? No, maybe they've already exploded.

That evening, I visited Elder Jong.

“Can you tell me about the San Dong Merchants?”

“Why do you want to know about them?”

“Because it's related to the Song Clan.”

I told him the rough story about the deal between the San Dong Merchants and the Song Clan.

Afterwards, Elder Jong stared at me with a questionable look. He was worried that I might do something rash again.

“Do you hate me?”

“I think you are mistaken, sir. I don’t hate you.”

“Hmph! Don’t lie to me.”

Even though he’d said these things, it seem that he wasn’t all that disappointed that I’d come to seek his counsel.

Elder Jong told me everything he knew about the San Dong Merchants. His age wasn’t just for show. He simply had that much knowledge and experience about everything related to the San Dong.

I asked him various questions, but none of them seemed out of the ordinary.

“So there wasn’t anything special that happened?”

“No, nothing out of the ordinary happened.”

“Thank you for telling me these things.”

“Oh! I don’t know if this will help you, but I just remembered something.”

“What is it?”

“A couple of months ago I had a chance to share a drink with one of their financial officers. He said that they were planning to make a deal with one of the Murim clans, but he didn’t tell me which clan it was.”

“Was there anything after that?”

“Nope, no news after that.”

“Thank you very much.”

To make it seem like he wasn’t ashamed for not being able to help too much he added, “Don’t think that doing things like this will make me like you.”

“I know. I know that you still don’t trust me. I’ll keep that in mind.”

“You rascal.”

“Do you have a young disciple or successor in mind?”

“Why are you asking?”

“So that I could make him my personal financial officer.”

“I do. But are you joking?”

Even if it was true, he wouldn't have believed me. Thus, I just left with a smile. I could feel that his gaze had become softer than before.

After meeting Elder Jong, I went to visit my father.

“Why are you here?”

“Simply because I wanted to share a drink with you, father.”

“You rascal.”

After the maid had brought some hot water he sent her away.

This was the first time that I was drinking tea made by my father.

“How’s your training going?”

“It’s going well, father.”

If we were to compare martial arts, I was sure that my Brightmoon Sword art would be more profound than my father’s. But if there came a time when I had to show it to him I’d only show him half of it

“Your mother has high hopes for you. Don’t disappoint her.”

Even though he said that my mother had high hopes for me, I knew that he felt the same way.

“I’ll do my best.”

I had decided to visit my father because of Song Hwa Rin’s favor.

Must I fulfill her favor? She was right. My father could make a big impact on Song Wu Kyung’s thought process.... but was this the right approach?

However, my instincts had already told me the answer; thus I decided not to bring it up.

“The tea tastes very good, father.”

I thought of a different solution for her.

Chapter 24: When Spring Arrives At The Crossroad (3)

The next day, Song Hwa Rin visited me once again.

“Did you tell your father?”

I could tell from her rash behavior that her heart was uneasy. It seems that Song Wu Kyung is going to make a decision either today or tomorrow.

“No, I didn’t tell him.”

Her face expressed her disappointment.

“Eh? Oh well. I’m sorry that I asked you a favor then.”

She turned around, about to leave.

“Your way of thinking is wrong.”

“What?”

“The more that you prevent someone from doing something, the more that they’ll want to do it. Let’s say that my father were to talk him out of it; it would leave a lasting impression on your father.”

She couldn't say anything back, considering the fact that she hadn't thought that far through.

"Not only that, but it could create a crack in their relationship. You don't want that, right?"

"Of course not. I definitely don't want their relationship to change because of this."

"Therefore, I think that this isn't the proper way to go about this. We should make your father give more thought to this—like giving him a reason to decline the offer."

"Giving him a reason to decline the offer?"

Yeah, you're right, but ... how do we go about finding that reason?"

"Have you looked any further into it?"

"What?"

"Have you looked any further into the people involved and the hidden resentment that they bear? Have you found a proper reason to stop these people?"

"What do you mean?" She tilted her head and gave me a funny

look.

“I decided to look further into it. I learned more about it from our Financial Officer, Elder Jong.”

“What did you find out?”

“A couple of months ago they were about to make a big financial breakthrough. However, it suddenly came to a halt.”

“What financial breakthrough?”

“I don’t know, as there weren’t any ways to look further into it. However, I have a feeling that we need to investigate what happened. If we know what happened then, we might know what they’re up to now.”

“But we don’t have time! My father said that he’ll give them his answer today!”

“There’s a way to look into it before then.”

“How?”

“By buying information from the information brokers. This is both the fastest and most reliable way to learn what happened.”

“Information brokers?”

Her voice was shaky. It seems that she’s never used an information broker before.

“However, to do so, I need some money.”

“How much?”

“A thousand nyang? Two thousand? Even I don’t know. However, I’m sure that the more you pay them, the more accurate the information will be.”

“Are you crazy? Two thousand nyang is a huge sum of money!”

“I’ll leave the final decision up to you.”

Two hours later she came back with the money. I didn’t ask her where she’d gotten it from. Since she was the heir to the Song Clan, getting two thousand nyang shouldn’t have been a problem for her.

While we were on our way to the information brokers, I bought two straw hats and cloaks to disguise ourselves with. She must’ve been a bit scared considering this was her first time doing this sort of thing.

She didn’t have a good impression of the information brokers, as

she thought that they lived in dark places and did dirty things . She thought that they were greedy, dirty people who would try to trick her. It was understandable since she had never used their services before, and there were still people who would try to trick you. However, if the price is right, they'll give you whatever information you need.

Kang Ho had a few different types of Information brokers. They ranged from private merchants all the way to large broker guilds. However, I knew all about them since the sect that Kal Sa Ryang manages is the information sect.

There are many information guilds in Kang Ho, but the three major information broker guilds in Kang Ho are The Heavenly Net Guild, The Ghostly Eye Palace, and The Thousand Crossroads Guild.

I had already looked into the different information merchants of San Dong, as there were two things I needed in order to enlarge my Clan: Money and Information.

Without these two things, there was no way for me to enlarge the Clan. Thus, I'd already looked into the information network of San Dong.

Because of this, I knew where the Heavenly Net Guild was, and took her with me to one of the Heavenly Net Guild's offices.

When we arrived at the entrance, she was hesitant.

“I’m nervous since this is my first time here....”

“Don’t be.”

“What?”

“Don’t show that it’s your first time here.”

“...Ok.”

After taking a couple of deep breaths and slapping her cheeks a couple of times, she managed to calm down.

A man with a goatee met us. He seemed very uptight, and didn’t seem to have any flaws, making him have the perfect appearance for this sort of work.

“What sort of Information are you looking for?”

“Information about the San Dong Merchants.”

There’s a price on all information. Just like other merchandise, the price of the information will fluctuate rather quickly. What was a hundred nyang the day before, could very well rise to be a thousand nyang the very next day.

“A thousand five-hundred nyang. Originally it was only worth

two hundred nyang, but it just rose a little while ago.

His words weren't without reason. Which meant that this information was worth its price.

Song hwa Rin looked at me hesitantly.

I turned towards the Merchant and told him, "Give us some time."

"Of course."

The merchant left in a rather excited mood, as if he'd already sold the information.

"Is this information worth its price?"

"I don't know"

You would never know if the information was worth it until you heard it from the merchant.

"What would you do?"

"I'd buy it."

Then she asked me, "Why?"

“Since it has something to do with my father. I don’t want to leave anything to chance when it comes to my family.”

She made her resolution this time and nodded at me.

When the merchant came back, she directly gave him one thousand five-hundred nyang.

“We’ll buy it.”

“Good. I’ll tell you about it then.”

I asked him which Clan the San Dong Merchant was going to work with

“A couple of months ago, the San Dong Merchants were in the middle of making a deal with the Yang Clan.”

“The Yang Clan?!”

We were both surprised. This was a name that we weren’t expecting.

A couple of month ago means that Yang GI Chul was still the Gaju of the Yang Clan.

“As you know, it’s harder for a Merchant Guild to enter the Murim than a Clan.”

“So they were going to trust that the Yang Clan would become bigger, and force their way into the Murim....”

“Yes. During the process, they had numerous conflict with other merchant guilds. And if things went their way, there was going to be an even larger conflict.”

This was a surprising piece of news that had never spread.

“But ever since Yang GI Chul died, the San Dong Merchant guild have received some backlash, and the new Bangju of the Yang Clan has cut all ties with the Merchant guild. Therefore, the formation of the San Dong Alliance was postponed.”

“And what were the other merchant guild’s reactions?”

“They, of course, are waiting for an opportunity to take revenge. This concludes the information about the San Dong Merchant guild.”

If this information hasn't been any useful to us, he wouldn't have made the price a thousand five-hundred nyang. Thus, she didn't complain about the price.

After listening to everything that the information merchant had to say about the San Dong Merchant guild, she became angry.

“Everything the San Dong Merchant guild said was a lie. They were just using us to divert the attention away from the other merchant guilds.”

I nodded in agreement with her.

“You’re completely right. They were using the San Doing Alliance as an excuse to get under the radar of the others.”

Because Song Wu Kyung was focusing his attention on the creation of an Alliance, he hadn’t paid much attention to the San Dong Merchant guild. He hadn’t understood their true intentions.

“...scary”

“Yes, it is very scary.”

She must have been pretty shocked. She never thought that Kang Ho-In would scheme this much.

“You should hurry and tell your father about this.”

She turned back towards me and said, “Thanks.”

“You bought the information with your money. There’s no need to thank me.”

She left after giving me a second glance.

Even though I had some feelings for her, the true reason I had helped her was because of my father. I truly wanted to protect his and her father's relationship.

Song Wu Kyung declined the offer from the San Dong Merchant guild. I'm sure he declined it in a nice way that didn't reveal his hands.

After that, both Song Wu Kyung and Song Hwa Rin visited our house.

Song Wu Kyung gave thanks with everyone present.

“Thanks to you, we were able to discover what they were scheming.”

“No, it's not like that. It was Rin-ee who found out about it. I just escorted her.”

“That's not what I heard. Without you, this situation could've become quite complicated.”

It seems that Hwa Rin had told her father that everything that

happened was because of me.

Song Wu Kyung grabbed my hand. His hand was full of callouses, but warm.

“Thank you very much.”

I could feel his true feelings though his eyes.

I had only helped him because of the close relationship that he and my father shared.

“No, all the credit should to go Rin-ee.”

I gave her all the credit to the end.

Since Hwa Rin remained silent, I didn't know what she was thinking.

Then Song Wu Kyung said to my parents, “We were able to escape this calamity thanks to our son-in-law. Thank you very much.”

My parents couldn't hold back their excitement either.

I could that my father was especially proud that I had help Song Wu Kyung avoid this crisis. However, he wasn't the type to boast

about me.

“This all happened because Rin-ee was able to gather enough money.”

My father added more as a compliment, “You have a very good daughter.”

Afterwards, Song Wu Kyung looked at me and Hwa Rin couple of times and said, “Now that I look at you two, it truly seems that you two are match made in heaven!”

My mother didn’t miss the chance either. “Yes, they complement each other well.”

It felt like they were going to hold a marriage ceremony tomorrow, so I took Hwa Rin and left the room. That was how we were able to get out of that.

I was surprised that everything that happened was related to me. If I hadn’t killed Yang Gi Chul, this wouldn’t have happened. If I hadn’t died, there wouldn’t be any of this nonsense about Alliances.

This was the first time Hwa Rin apologized to me as sincerely as she did. “I’m sorry that I asked you for this kind of favor, when I was the first one to cancel our engagement.”

Then she lowered her head and said, “Thank you. Really.”

I gave her a light smile since I didn't have any significant feelings for her.

If it was the younger me, I would've wanted to chase after her and make her mine simply because of her beauty. I wouldn't have been able to control my emotions and wouldn't have cared about anything else in the world. I'd have caused a scene just like Byuk Lee Dan had. But I was someone who'd lived seventy odd years. I understood her all too well. I understood why she'd wanted to cancel our engagement, and how she wanted to help her father.

“Like I said before, this is something that you did.”

She turned and looked at me. When I waved at her, she gave me a little smile and quickly left.

I was rooting for her springtime of youth.

Praying that she'd achieve what she wanted to achieve.

Chapter 25: When Spring Arrives At The Crossroad (4)

In the dead of night, with only the moonlight to guide me, I ran along the edge of the pond.

I was able to clearly see the fruits of my work. There were definite changes to my body.

The reason that most people fail to improve themselves is because they can't overcome barriers, which come in various stages and forms during one's development.

In my previous life, I had to overcome many barriers to get to where I was. I still wonder how I managed to overcome all those barriers to this day, as they were things I'd achieved among my most difficult times. There were some days where I'd just wanted to quit.

However, hardship isn't the only form of barrier. At one point I became so complacent that I didn't want to do anything. I wanted a reason to do something, anything, but everything had simply become annoying. That was when I first stumbled upon a barrier more troublesome than the barrier of hardship; I stumbled upon my internal demons.

Since I have experiences overcoming these barriers, my training was rather easy. It felt as if time slowed down when I trained. Barriers may get in my way one day, but I'm confident that I will be able to overcome them.

I stopped running and looked out across the pond. There was a cool mist hovering over the pond's surface.

I kicked one of the small logs that was lying near the pond into it.

Splash!

After the log had landed in the water, I jumped towards it.

After gently landing on top of the log, I jumped upwards. Whilst midair, I slashed my sword downward at the water.

Slassssh!

Slassssh!

The water parted for a moment, before quickly returning to its natural state. But those with keen eyes would have seen it. The water had parted in a cross shape before returning to normal. This was my first stance, the Unwavering Stance.

Whip!

Swish!

Now a vortex had formed in the calm water.

My second stance, the Life Devoting Stance, was displayed

Shiiing!

Boooom!

There was a loud explosion, followed by a pillar of water, as if a cannon had been fired. My third stance, the Nothingness Stance, was an attack that turned a certain area into nothingness.

Tap!

I soared through the sky once more using the log as a stepping stone. I kept practicing the same three stances until I'd exhausted all of the energy from my dantian.

The reason why I was repeatedly training like this was so that I could become more accustomed to my technique. I wanted these techniques to come to me as naturally as breathing. When you breathe, you don't feel anything. For these techniques, I needed it to be the same. I shouldn't have to consciously think about these techniques; I should be able to execute them naturally.

This is why real experts can execute their techniques faster than they think.

After exhausting all of my energy, I landed on the log once again.

I'd fall into the water if I were to lose my balance, but I was able to balance myself perfectly. In a stable position, I started to utilize my breathing technique as I began cultivating. In any situation, and any position, I'm able to utilize my breathing technique.

After a full cycle I was able to recover a quarter of my energy. After the second cycle, half, the third, three quarters, and by the end of the fourth cycle, I managed to completely recover all of my energy.

It wasn't hard to recover my energy. The hard part was increasing the size of one's dantian and thus the overall quantity of energy. That was the reason that I was continuously training.

Since my rate of cultivation was nine times the rate of a normal cultivator, I spend most of my time training my body so that it can withstand all the energy that I cultivate.

Even though I've gotten stronger than before, I still need to get stronger.

After I finished training, I came back home.

When I reached my room after washing up, Kwang Du was waiting for me.

"I heard that Lord Song and Lady Song visited yesterday?"

"Yeah, they did."

“Did you have a private drink with Lady Song?”

“No, we just went our separate ways.”

Kwang Du made a disappointed look.

“You should’ve had a drink with her. You know, catch up on things since you scored some points with her.”

“I didn’t do it because of her.”

“They’re the same thing. Ai, young master... it seems that you’ll have to receive a special lesson from me. I’ll teach you how to flirt with a girl!”

“Before you teach me anything about flirting, I need to verify something. Have you ever held a girl’s hand?”

Kwang Du became nervous due to my sudden question.

“Ahem, aren’t you belittling me a little too much?”

“How about a kiss? And not counting the ones from before you were ten.”

Kang Du flinched a bit.

“Of course I have! Don’t you know how smooth I am... Ehh, do I really have to tell you these things? If I wanted them to, girls would just...”

This punk, he’s a real bachelor!

He shook his head when he saw me give him a doubtful smile.

I opened the window with a smile.

The maids’ clothing became lighter, and the flowers and trees in the yard started to bud. Even the cold weather stopped.

“I think that spring’s going to arrive soon.”

“...no, that’s really... no....”

“HAHAH!”

The long winter had finally ended and spring had arrived.

The Byuk Clan was livelier than ever.

It seemed that, ever since the debt problem had been solved,

everyone had some more breathing room.

Jung Yeo, who'd become the new Head of the Yang Clan, convinced my father that he couldn't take the money as an atonement for the previous Yang Clan head's actions. Thus, father simply had to comply with his wishes, allowing our debt problem to be solved.

The only flaw that the Byuk Clan had was me, but that flaw was now gone. Now that Byuk Lee Dan had grown up, and now that the debt had been resolved, new recruits started filing in, and the family's mood improved.

In addition to that, I heard that they'd recruited more members into the sword sect.

Last time they'd only recruited twenty or so men with the money I gave them. This time however, they'd recruited thirty men. More than two hundred people had shown up for the recruitment. This showed how much face these martial artists gave my father and Seo Jung.

I later heard that, on the night of recruitment, my father and Seo Jung had emptied a couple bottles of wine. It has been a while since this sort of thing had happened, which shows just how emotional a thing this was for them.

And my mother was still boasting about how I'd turned over a new leaf. Everywhere I went I heard compliments.

I was truly happy.

I was happy that my rebirth was meaningful, since it ended up becoming hope for others.

Kwang Du was deeply focused on his training.

He spent the whole night practicing the new techniques that I'd taught him, devoting almost all of his time to training.

“Allow me to give you some pointer.”

Kwang Du was surprised that I'd offered to give him some pointers.

“Why so sudden, young master? Is there something that's bothering you?”

“Ho ho ho...”

“Please don't laugh like that.”

“Now, now, hurry up and take your sword out.”

Kwang Du was shocked.

“We’re sparring with real swords?”

“Then do you want to spar with sticks?”

“But isn’t that how it’s supposed to be?”

I stared at him cautiously and said, “If you don’t intend to use that sword outside, then you shouldn’t even take it out.”

Kwang Du understood my true intentions. If he wanted to become a real Murim-In, this was something that he had go through. In peaceful times like this, it was hard for one to experience a real fight.

In a normal School and Clan, fighting with real swords was banned unless it was between people who’d trained for a long time. This was because even the slightest mistake could harm the other person. Thus, in peaceful times like this, real experiences were hard to come by.

Kwang Du was shaking as he took out his blade.

“I’m scared, young master.”

“Of course you are. Why wouldn’t you be when this is the first time you’ve drawn it against another person. It’s natural to be scared.”

“Yes!”

“However, you can’t be nervous just because you’re scared.”

I don’t know how Kwang Du took it, but every word that I said was from my personal experience.

It feels like the one who’s truly learning something from this process is me. As I was teaching him, I was able to rediscover things that I’d forgotten.

What I’d just said to him is an example. When I hold my blade now, I feel comfort and reassurance. But when I think back to when I first held a blade, I can remember that I was just like Kwang Du is now: scared of the blade. In this life, I’ll try my best to go down a different path.

“I’m scared that I might hurt you, young master.”

“Don’t worry about me, come.”

“Yes.”

Kwang Du used the first technique. However, he wasn’t able to display it to its fullest extent, since he was hesitant over the fact that he might hurt me.

“Do it right! Open your eyes and do it properly!”

Kwang Du came at me once again.

I received his attack, then proceeded to counter him whilst controlling my strength.

I did this so that he could experience what a true fight was like.

“Clang! Clang Clang Clang!”

After our blades had clashed with each other a couple of times, Kwang Du lost his balance and closed his eyes.

“Open your eyes! If you close your eyes you’re dead! Concentrate!”

“Yes!”

Kwang Du bit his teeth and used his techniques again.

The sound of blades clashing resounded once again.

He managed to display the first six techniques.

When he used his seventh technique I easily countered it and swung my sword towards his face.

“Ha!”

I stopped my blade right in front of his face.

“This is what a real fight feels like.”

“...Yes, young master.”

His voice was shaky. Since this was his first real experience, I'm sure that this moment was something that he wouldn't ever be able to forget.

Kwang Du quickly sat down once I withdrew my sword.

I sat next to him.

“Kwang Du-Ya.”

“Yes.”

“You can stop learning if you're scared. There's no need to push yourself too hard.”

After some time, he reaffirmed himself. “Young master, I want to go as far as I can with this. I like learning martial arts. Even though it was scary... I felt excited. I felt both happy and excited to fight.”

It was the first time that I'd seen Kwang Du this serious.

Yeah, if he was the type to easily give up, he would've done so by now.

"Then we should see it through to the end."

"I plan to do that, young master. But you can't forget me and leave me behind!"

"That will depend on how you do."

"Ehh, don't be like that!"

At that moment...

Drop, Drop.

Drop.

"Eh?"

A few water drops fell from the sky as it began to rain.

"It's spring! It's the spring rain!"

With an excited look, Kwang Du gazed up at the sky and said, “I think that spring is finally here.”

For some awkward reason, I started to feel happy.

Even when I saw the first snow I hadn’t had this sort of reaction.

But this time, the spring rain had somewhat moved my heart.

I couldn’t wait for spring. I was also curious about what fate had in store for me.

“Yeah, it looks like it’s finally spring.”

A few days later, as if it was riding the spring wind, news reached us.

“A new Mengju has been decided.”

The news that I’d been waiting for had finally arrived.

“Who is it?”

“The Heavenly Dao gate master has become the new Mengju.”

“What?!”

I was truly shocked. Including my previous life, there weren't many times that I'd been this shocked.

“Bullshit!”

Seeing me throw a fit, Kwang Du was surprised.

“Why?”

Why? It's because of Ma Bong GI! I never thought that Ma Bong GI would be suited to be the Mengju.

Ma Bong GI was the leader of the Heavenly Dao Gate that I'd disguised myself as before. He was someone who had a very complicated relationship with women. He was someone that you could fully see through after just seeing through one of his faults. He was someone who was greedy for money and power, and whose character is questionable.

Someone like him will be the next Mengju? Someone like him will be my successor?

“Did you hear it wrong?”

“No, young master, The entire city has been pretty boisterous

because of this news.”

There’s no way that Kal Sa Ryang would’ve picked Ma Bong GI. That means that something must’ve happened.

I looked towards where the Murim Alliance Headquarter was located...

“Something must’ve gone wrong.”

Book 02

Chapter 26: My Beginning Is (1)

The news was true.

Ma Bong Gi had become the new Mengju. That old baboon had actually become the Mengju.

After telling my parents that I'd go into secluded training, I got on a horse and proceeded to ride towards Mu Hwan of Ho Buk Fortress, which serves as the headquarters for the Murim Alliance.

I was fully aware of my position. I knew that I couldn't change anything since my martial arts hadn't developed to the point where I had any level of influence.

Since I'd been reborn as Byuk Lee Dan, I hadn't held any interest towards becoming the Mengju again. I simply wanted to live my new life in peace.

The reason that I was going to Mu Hwan was because I wanted to know what happened to Kal Sa Ryang.

This was something that couldn't have happened unless something had happened to him.

Since the Mengju had already been decided, his fate had also most-likely been decided. And I wasn't the type to wait around for the news to reach me.

The first place that I visited after reaching Mu Hwan was the Murim Headquarters.

I was able to see the Murim Alliance Building from quite far away. Mu Hwan was a place that bustled with so many people it wouldn't be a surprise for it to be called an independent city.

Behind the large fence that surrounded the building stood numerous martial artists guarding the Murim Alliance Building. Just the gate alone had over thirty people guarding it.

I gazed at the Murim Alliance Building from a distance for quite a while. Coming back here and seeing it like... it somewhat calms my heart.

However, my instinct, which had gotten me through many difficult situations, was whispering to me.

That it was time for me to get calm.

I wonder how long it's been since I last saw this building like this—from the outside.

I suddenly recalled the day that I'd first entered this place as the new Mengju.

Becoming the Mengju back then had been a major decision, even

for myself, who was considered the Strongest Under the Heavens.

Although I hadn't shown it on the outside, I was worried about my performance, and wasn't able to sleep properly for the first few months.

It felt as if it were just yesterday, yet dozens of years have already gone by. The reason that I knew so much about the Murim Alliance was because it was part of me. No matter whether it be the streets or the buildings, I know where people are hiding their secrets.

I truly wanted to just scale the walls and run to Kal Sa Ryang's office. However, I knew that I couldn't just do that anymore, since I didn't have the ability to casually come go in the Murim headquarters. I probably had the ability to enter the outer hall, but the inner hall it would be impossible with my current abilities.

I decided to just book a room at the nearest inn.

The owner said that I was in luck, as there was only one room left. Ever since the new Mengju had been announced, many Kang Ho-in from around the country had started to gather here. They'd arrived here early for the new Mengju's appointment that was going to happen in a month.

There were rumors going around that this was going to be the grandest appointment of any Mengju yet. Because of this, the city

was in a festive mood.

I came down from my room to the restaurant and ordered a bottle wine, deciding to listen in on others' conversations whilst sipping on my wine.

One thing I learned while listening in on their conversations was that these people didn't feel threatened at all by Ma Bong Gi becoming the new Mengju. They were ignorant since they didn't know much about Ma Bong Gi. They just took Ma Bong Gi as one of the masters of the Five Great Clans of Central Pain.

Rather, there was another empty rumor flying around.

“Did you hear? Ma Bong Gi killed Princess Am Young, one of the Leader of the Thirteen Demonic Alliance!”

“Yeah, I heard about that. Someone told me that the previous Mengju took the credit for what Ma Bong Gi did.”

“Oh my! That really doesn't seem like something that the Strongest Under the Heavens would do though.”

Hearing this made me really want to smash the table in front of me. I remember how much of a struggle I'd gone through to kill Princess Am Young.

I still remember the day that I'd killed Princess Am Young. How Ma Bong Gi had shown up after I'd finished doing all the dirty

work. How he'd shown his ugly face to me right after avoiding the life-death situation.

In the war against the Thirteen Demon Alliance, the Five Great Clans of Central Plain had been forced to help the Murim Alliance. However, the Masters of these clans had done their best to keep their casualties low.

This was understandable. If it were me, I would've done the same.

However, of all of them, the Heavenly Dao Gate was the one that had barely gotten into any conflict with the enemy.

Ever since then, they'd been living under my watchful eye. How had he managed to become the Mengju?

But something was suspicious. Right as the new Mengju was appointed, praise had instantly started to spread about him.

I carefully watched the people who were spreading rumors, and trailed them when they left. It was as I'd anticipated; they went to other inns to spread more rumors. They were mostly praising Ma Bong Gi's hidden deeds, or just telling flat out lies.

These punks!

I was certain that they were from Heavenly Dao Gate.

I suddenly remembered what Kal Sa Ryung had said to me one day: “Even if you’re the Strongest Under the Heavens, you still can’t rule the Central Plains!”

To rule Kang Ho you needed power. But I was only able to unify the Central Plains as the Mengju because I had many subordinates who were willing to listen to my commands.

Being the Strongest Under the Heavens only meant that that person was the best fighter. That person could easily kill any Mengju. But as just the Strongest Under the Heavens? You can’t rule the Central Plains as that alone.

What was happening here was a prime example of that. There’s only so much a single person can do. Even if I were to beat these guys up right now, there were still others who will spread false rumors all throughout Kang Ho. Not that I was going to beat them up.

A few hours later, I entered a restaurant that was close to the Murim headquarters.

It was a popular restaurant where many martial artist from the Murim headquarter came by to drink. However, it wasn’t exclusive to the Murim-In; others were still allowed to drink here as well.

When I entered the restaurant, it was full of people. More than half of them were dressed as some sort of person from the Murim.

I took a seat at one of the tables to the side and ordered plenty of food and wine, as I was going to be staying here for quite a while.

Ever since I'd finished opening the last of my meridian points, my sense of hearing had been heightened to the point that I was able to hear every conversation that was happening with only a single thought.

Most of the conversation was centered around the new Mengju.

Some were saying negative things about him, others were talking about his problem with women... there were all sorts of different thoughts and opinions about the new Mengju flying around the room.

But I was patiently waiting.

Around midnight, I heard about the information on what I'd wanted to hear.

At the table closest to mine, I was able to hear a conversation that a couple of men from the intelligence sect were discussing.

"Have you seen Chancellor Kal lately? He hasn't been looking too good."

"Of course he wouldn't be looking too good."

“What do you think will happen to him?”

“Who knows? Won’t he be relegated, or be forced to retire at this rate?”

“Probably?”

“Didn’t you hear? When the new Mengju gets instated, he’s going to reassign the entire intelligence sect.”

“Do you think we’ll be alright?”

“Who knows?”

They trailed off.

I was able to feel part of the burden lifted from my shoulders now that I’d been assured that Kal Sa Ryang was still alive.

Yes, for now, I’ll be satisfied with just you being alive.

I wasn’t worried about Baek Hyo.

The absolute safest place from all of this political turmoil was the Fierce Guard Sect.

Since they were in charge of protecting the Mengju, and were treated as an independent sect, they wouldn't become scapegoats for anything. Especially Baek Pyo, who was both innocent and uninterested in politics.

Now that I was certain of Kal Sa Ryang's status, I wanted to know what had happened.

Why hadn't he been able to stop it? Why had he delayed this for so long? If the three pillars that were under my direct control are still on board, there shouldn't have been anything that could've stopped Kal Sa Ryang from doing what he needed to do.

Had they turned against him?

I wouldn't be able to find out what happened here, so I left the restaurant.

Early the next morning, I left the inn I was staying in.

The best case scenario would be to hear it directly from Kal Sa Ryang, but I knew that that was impossible. Simply meeting the Chancellor of the Murim Alliance was highly difficult. Even if I was somehow able to miraculously meet him, he wouldn't know me since I'm no longer the Strongest Under the Heavens, but Byuk Lee Dan.

I could have easily found out what I wanted to know through

information brokers, but it would be impossible for me to purchase the information I wanted right now.

Something like this would cost over ten thousand Nyang; however, no one would be able to verify whether or not this information was correct.

Finding out what had happened was for another day. All I wanted now was to seeing Kal Sa Ryang's face, even if it was just once.

Then I remembered someone.

With that person in mind, I arrived at a restaurant known as Unleakable Tavern.

“Welcome.”

A middle-aged woman welcomed me with a calm smile.

Only a few people in Kang Ho know about this secret. That the person who just greeted me is one of the leaders of the Heavenly Net Organization.

One of the top three information merchant organizations in all of Kang Ho.

The Heavenly Net's name means that it's a vast, large net which will not miss a single thing; it will scoop up and find every single

thing that you're trying to hide.

Heavenly Net was truly a name full of meaning.

How could you possibly gather all of that information with a net?

But just like their namesake, the operatives of this organization worked very hard so that they didn't miss even a single shred of information.

"Is there a particular tea that you are looking for?"

"I'll take whatever you recommend."

"Please wait a moment."

I sat down in one of the chairs by the window, then gazed at the cook who was currently in the kitchen. Even though the waitress was an expert, the real expert was the cook I was looking at. He was the waitress's bodyguard.

There was a time when Kal Sa Ryang had brought her over to meet me. I had been surprised that one of the leaders of the Heavenly Net Organization was a female. Not counting the fact that she was in her mid thirties, she was a real beauty.

If my memories served me right, Kal Sa Ryung might've had some interest in her. However, since Kal Sa Ryung was so busy

with his work, he didn't have time to marry.

That was my first time seeing Kal Sa Ryung so interested in a women; thus I rooted for him. Later on, when I asked him about her, he'd just smiled.

After that event, I'd forgotten about her. But now that I might have to buy some information, I'd suddenly remembered this place.

Would Kal Sa Ryang visit this place?

"This is my favorite tea. Please try it."

After smelling the tea, I was able to tell that it was one of those that calmed you down. The taste wasn't bad either.

"It's pretty good."

"I'm pleased that you like it."

When I'd first met her ten years ago, she'd been in her thirties, which means that right now, she should be in her forties. However, she still looked like she was in her early thirties.

"Is this your first time?"

“Yes, this is my first time here.”

This was the first time she may have seen me as Byuk Lee Dan.

“Are you here because of an appointment?”

“No.”

“Then, might I ask, what for?”

“To offer incense to the previous Mengju.”

“It was a sad news.”

I was able to see some regret on her face.

“Do you know the new Mengju?”

“About Lord Ma?”

Even though she was one of the people who had the most information about Ma Bong Gi, she just replied to me with a smile.

“I don’t know much about him. All I know is that he’s a master of one of the Five Great Clans.”

“Oh, alright.”

I wanted to ask her where Kal Sa Ryung was right now. How Ma Bong Gi had become the new Mengju. She could've told me everything.

But I couldn't do it.

I ordered two more cups of tea, and waited until evening. However, Kal Sa Ryung never showed up.

“Then, I'll be off.”

The waiter showed me out with a smile.

“Please come again.”

I was walking down one of the many alleyways.

There was another place I wanted to check out before going back to the inn for the night.

The place that I arrived at was also an tavern.

It had a banner with the word ‘wind’ written on it.

Was it because the owner liked the name ‘wind’? Or was it because the owner liked the feeling of being laid back? Back when I was still the Mengju, I’d frequently visited this place to have some wine when I’d wanted to take a stroll.

I like this place since it was quite a ways away from the Alliance Headquarters, and because it was a pretty small shop capable of fitting at most six people. Thus, it was empty most of the time.

Even though I don’t personally enjoy drinking, I came here quite often simply because I liked the atmosphere.

On those days only Baek Pyo would escorted me, he’d always declined the wine that I’d offered him.

He could’ve had one drink, but he was faithful to his duty, and had never took even a single sip. This showed how faithfully he carried out his duty, and how much I meant to him.

He was one of my most loyal followers, which made me want to see him just that much more.

“Welcome!”

Hearing the owner’s voice, I stopped dead in my tracks.

I was so surprised I almost yelled.

The one who'd greeted me was Baek Pyo.

Chapter 27: My Beginning Is (2)

I was even more surprised, as I'd just been thinking about him on my way here.

“Has the owner changed?”

Hearing my shaky voice, Baek Pyo replied to me with a smile, “Indeed. I took over this place a couple of days ago, and today happens to be the opening day. You're my first customer.”

This...

“Now then, please take a seat wherever you find comfortable.”

I sat down where I always sat, causing Baek Pyo to say with a chuckle, “That's my favorite spot too. Ha Ha Ha.”

“If you don't mind me asking, why is this your favorite spot?”

“There's no particular reason.”

He gave an awkward laugh.

“What can I get you to drink?”

I decided to order some wine and the snack that I'd always order

here. When Baek Pyo heard my order, he was truly surprised.

“These... both happen to also be my favorites. I never expected my first guest to not only take a seat here, but to also order these specific things.”

I truly wanted to just tell him that I was the Strongest Under the Heavens. Since it was Baek Pyo, the one who'd been in charge of protecting me,, there were many ways to prove to him that I was the previous Mengju. There had been many private conversations between the two of us that no one else knows about.

If I did, he'd more than likely choose to leave this place to follow me

But I won't tell him. The Strongest Under the Heavens has already passed on. He's already passed on from both his life and this one. As of now, I'm Byuk Lee Dan. If there ever comes a time that I have to help him, I'll help him as Byuk Lee Dan, not as the Strongest Under the Heavens.

At that moment, a new guest arrived.

“Here's my grand opening gift to you.”

The new guest, a middle aged man, gave Baek Pyo a small pot.

I almost dropped my wine glass when I saw who it was. I was even more surprised than when I saw Baek Pyo.

The person who'd just entered was Kal Sa Ryang.

Worried that I might be seen, I quickly turned my head away. However, my heart was still racing.

I'd never even dreamed of meeting Kal Sa Ryung here.

What were the odds of meeting both Kal Sa Ryang and Baek Pyo, here, at the same time?

"Welcome."

Baek Pyo greeted him with a face full of emotions. It seems that he hadn't expected Kal Sa Ryung to personally visit him.

"The atmosphere here seems very cozy."

"I was just lucky, that's all. The previous owner sold the place and went back to the countryside."

"Ah, so that's how it is."

"What can I get you?"

"Whatever you feel like."

Baek Pyo proceeded to offer him a drink.

Kal Sa Ryang looked my way a couple of times, but didn't mind me in the end.

He looked tired.

I wanted to go over to him; to ask him what had happened. I wanted to ask him why he was in such a state.

Kal Sa Ryang went out the back door.

“Let's get some fresh air.”

“All right then.”

Baek Pyo followed him.

I heightened my sense of hearing, and was barely able to make out their conversation.

“This was the place that he'd occasionally visit, right?”

“So you already knew.”

“He told me many times that there was a place he knew with a good atmosphere. He said that he was going to take me here with

him next time... why was he in such a rush to go?”

Kal Sa Ryang let out a sigh.

I also regretted what had happened. I'd wanted to spend more sincere time with him.

“Don't you want to stay in the Alliance?”

“I'm sorry. I don't plan to guard the new Mengju, as he isn't worthy.”

“No, it should be me who should be saying sorry.”

“You did your best. It's just that the Moonlight Sect and the Iron Cavalry Sect betrayed us. There was no way for you stop them.”

When I heard what Baek Pyo had said, my heart sunk. The Moonlight Sect and the Iron Cavalry Sect had betrayed them?

This... I couldn't believe this. If it was from some random passerby, I would've never believed them, and would've shouted at them 'stop with your nonsense'.

But these words had come from the people I trusted the most.

I remembered that the leaders of those two sects weren't people

who'd easily betray anyone.

Kal Sa Ryung spoke in a disappointed tone.

“Technically speaking, they didn't betray us, considering the fact that they were only loyal to the Mengju.”

No, this was betrayal. How could they just abandon the people that I cared about because I was dead? And how could anybody in their right mind allow someone like Ma Bong Gi to succeed me?

“So, Chancellor Kal, what are your plans now?”

“I plan on sticking around a bit longer. Even though I know that quite a few people want me gone.”

“...will you be all right?”

“They won't be able to do much to me, as there will be people watching. I'll probably be demoted from my position, but I'll hold out as long as I can.”

“That's not what I'm saying...”

“I know what you're thinking. You don't have to worry about me, I'll take care of myself.”

“I hope so, but...”

I knew what kind of person Kal Sa Ryung was. He could be fooled once, but he wasn't the type of person who could be fooled a second time. If he'd said something like this, it have meant that he had some sort of lifeline.

“It might be rude of me to ask, but... why aren't you leaving?”

“The Alliance is his home.”

“I feel bad when you say that.”

“You shouldn't feel that way. You left your position as the head of security because of him. To be honest, I feel ashamed for staying behind.”

“Chancellor...”

“Whether it's me or you he's still the reason that we're—respectively—staying behind and leaving the alliance. In the end, our reason is the same.”

“I really do miss the previous Mengju.”

“I also miss him. However, we have to move on. Now, we have to live our lives our way. I'll be off now.”

“Please take care of yourself.”

“Just take care of your own business. I’ll visit occasionally.”

“You’re welcome anytime.”

After saying that, Kal Sa Ryang left. Since he left immediately after his conversation with Baek Pyo, I wasn’t able to see him before he left. However, I knew that he wasn’t depressed about the recent events.

Sa Ryung-Ah... please be strong.

Baek Pyo came back into the store, trying to hide his disappointment with a smile. He proceeded to ask me, “How was it?”

To which I answered with a smile, “It was very good.”

I emptied the bottle and left the shop.

On my way back to the inn, I was deep in thought.

I couldn’t get over the fact the both the Moonlight Sect and the Iron Cavalry Sect had betrayed me. Thinking about it made my blood boil.

But why had they done it?

When I entered the inn, I calmed myself down, and decided to head back home. I wasn't going to make any rash decisions due to my emotions.

I'll go back home and raise my strength. I'll become strong enough that I can back up my word, and protect everyone.

Sa Ryang-Ah, Baek Pyo-Ya...

You guys have to stay alive until that day.

I returned home.

“How did it go?”

He must've been curious about what happened.

“Were you able to accomplish what you wanted?”

I shook my head.

Kwang Du burst out laughing.

“Why are you laughing?”

“You'd be inhuman to accomplish everything you set out to do.”

I knew that Kwang Du was trying to comfort me.

“Train hard, so that you can do the things I can't, and accomplish everything I tell you to do.”

“Ho ho! So you want to trust me with the things that you can't solve huh. It seems like this inhuman person has become normal once again.”

“Ha Ha.”

“You must be tired. Go and rest, young master. I'll have the cooks prepare your favorite dishes.”

Seeing Kwang Du walk away, I felt the comfort of being back home once again.

I decided not to pay much attention to the Murim Alliance anymore. Not to Kal Sa Ryung and Baek Pyo, not to Ma Gi Bong, not even my death.

Nothing was going to change even if I just thought about it.

The first thing that I needed to do was raise up the Byuk Clan.

Thus, I made my decision. I was going to take an active role in raising my clan.

Something about Kang Ho made me suspicious. Someone who shouldn't have become a Mengju had become one. There were bound to be some disturbances soon, and I wanted our clan's strength to be high enough to be able to overcome anything that happens in the future.

My plan was to be prepared for whatever storms might come.

And a storm is coming.

I decided to raise my personal training regime.

The most important thing to do was raise my strength.

Even though I might not have to reveal my full strength, there may come a time where I have to unleash all of my strength to wipe the enemy out.

The most important thing was my internal energy. It would be best if I could obtain some profound elixirs or medicine, but that

would depend on both my luck and money.

Thus, there was only one thing that I could do at the moment: Cut back on my sleep and cultivate while raising my external strength.

I was preparing for when I'd need to fight while conserving my energy. The most important factor of using the least amount of energy whilst utilizing my sword art is my external strength.

And I had reached a bottleneck.

I remembered one of the things that Kal Sa Ryang had said.

‘You can’t do everything alone.’

Yep, he was right.

I couldn’t just make a hundred clones of me. Thus, I needed my own personal organization. One that will listen to my every command. But organizations like this aren’t made overnight. It takes years of investment to make an organization like this.

Thus, my idea led to yet another surprise for my parents.

“I want to have my own Sword Sect.”

Both my father and mother's mouths opened at the same time. I think this was the biggest surprise I'd given them yet.

"Do you even know what it means to have your own Sword Sect?"

"Of course I know, father."

"Do you also know what it means to lead one?"

"Yes."

My mother proceeded to ask me carefully, "Don't we already have one?"

"Yes, we have an excellent Sword Sect. You can consider this one a subsidiary Sword Sect."

I said it like this so that it wouldn't be in conflict with the main branch.

"I will call it the Lesser Sword Sect, to honor the main one."

My father agreed with me after hearing that I'd thought it through this much.

"If you truly want to do this, I won't stop you. However, you'll

have to provide for both their housing and their food yourself.”

“Thank you, father.”

“How many people do you plan on picking?”

“At first, I plan to start with around twenty men.”

My mother gave me a light smile. It was a smile that made me instantly want to repay her for everything she’d done for me.

“You can do it, right son?”

I answered her with a bright smile.

“Yeeah.”

Before I started recruiting, I met with Seo Jung and discussed the situation with him.

Even though I might have more experience, and be more proficient, at running an organization, he was still better than me at running a Sword Sect.

I took Kwang Du with me and had him teach us both together.

How to train the men. How to set up the hierarchy. Who to appoint as the chief. The dignity and pride that each and everyone has towards the Sword Sect....

He left after saying one last thing, “The most important thing about a Sword Sect is its people.”

He said the same thing I’d said to Kwang Du.

“In Martial Arts, the most important thing is people.”

After Seo Jung had left, I was left alone with Kwang Du.

“What did elder Seo’s last sentence mean?”

“Why don’t you ask him yourself?”

“That’s... it’s hard to talk to elder Seo.”

“And I’m not?”

“You’re more friendly, young master.”

How could I come to hate someone like him?

“The most important about any Murim organization is their skill. Not anyone can become your subordinate. Will you take in someone who’s strong, yet have a bad personality? Or, as another example, what would happen if it was full of people like Yang Gi Kang?”

“I don’t even want to think about that.”

“That’s what elder Seo meant by what he said. Sword Sect is a place where people gather. Thus, the most important thing is to know what they think, and what kind of character they have.”

“I’m sure that everyone will be loyal to someone like you.”

“You can never expect anyone to be loyal to you from the beginning. Loyalty takes both ample time and experience to build. The most important thing is to give them a sense of belonging.”

“How are you so knowledgeable about this?”

“Jealous? You can also...”

...become like me with time and age. You’ll probably be able to have more profound thoughts than me, who was encaged in the Murim Headquarter.

“Can I also join this Sword Sect?”

“No.”

“Why? Please include me!”

“You still have ways to go.”

Not only that, but I have greater plans for you.

“If I get better, you have to include me.”

“We’ll see when the time comes.”

“However, young master, why are you making your own Sword Sect?”

He asked with a curious look.

“To make money, you need an organization.”

The bigger your organization, the easier it is to make money. Strength is money, and money is power.

“But why do you need to make money?”

“To increase our strength.”

“What about after that?”

“I want to make the Byuk clan the number one clan in all of the Central Plains.”

It seems that Kwang Du was surprised to hear me say number one clan in all of the Central Plains.

However, this was my resolution. Even though I might only be saying it to Kwang Du, I also meant for the whole world to hear me.

“The Byuk Clan will become the strongest clan. I’ll make it such that no one will be able to even touch us.”

Kwang Du replied with a shaky voice, “Is this for real?”

“Yes. I’m serious. This is just the beginning of my dream.”

Kwang Du’s face became full of determination.

“I’m sure that you’ll be able to achieve it. I’ll help you achieve it with all of my strength.”

Even though my beginning only started with twenty people, my goal was to make it the top of the Central Plains.

This is where it all begins: Underneath the warm and breezy
springtime sunlight.

Chapter 28: My Beginning Is (3)

I ended up recruiting twenty men for my Sword Sect.

There must've been some rumors going around about the Byuk Clan, as more than a hundred people showed up. However, when they were told that I was recruiting for the Lesser Sword Sect, fewer people showed up than last time.

However, this was still more people than I'd expected. There were many familiar faces, as well as several new faces.

When Kwang Du saw all the people who'd shown up, he became excited.

“Young Master! There seem to be over a hundred people here!”

There were people from different age groups, as well as even a few women.

“Are we going to pick women too?”

“If they have what it takes to join.”

“Oh! You should pick them all!”

“Do you like womens that much?”

“Do I like them? Well, it’s much better than only having men around at least.”

That wasn’t the reason I was picking women. When I’d been in charge of the Murim Alliance, I’d learned of their importance. During an important mission, it was much easier to disguise a woman. They could be disguised as a girlfriend, a mother, or even a daughter.

Because of this, I decided that I’d pick two of them. Of course, they’d still have to be picked fairly, based on their skill.

“Now then, let’s begin.”

One by one the recruits came up to me and showed off their basic skills.

I was able to shorten the testing process through this method. Just by seeing the way they held their weapon, I was able to tell how skilled they were.

I was able to eliminate more than half of the applicants through just this test.

There might be some people who’d question how I could evaluate someone’s skill just like that, but I had years of experience to back me up.

After I finished evaluating everyone, I proceeded to interview the remaining people.

“Why do you want to join the Lesser Sword Sect?”

There were various answers to my question, ranging from earning money, to wanting to make a name for themselves, to them simply doing it out of respect for my father. However, I wasn't testing their answers, but their truthfulness. The people who lied usually exposed it with some sort of movement or expression. Thus, I picked those who'd been truthful over those who hadn't.

Even if one of them had a great amount of skill, if they didn't have a decent character, than they weren't any better than trash.

As I'd told Kwang Du before, the most important thing about the Sword Sect was a sense of belonging. If everyone had a sense of belonging, they'd inevitably develop a closer bond with one another.

Of course, I planned to expand the Lesser Sword Sect. Of these twenty yet-to-be-chosen members, those who had excellent achievement in the future would become future sect leaders and chiefs. I planned to have not one, but ten, maybe even twenty, lesser sword sects.

Later that day, I stood in front of the twenty new recruits who'd passed. There were a total of eighteen men and two women.

I decided not to try and hide my strength. I decided to show my overbearing strength to them. Since this was our first meeting, I didn't think that it was necessary to hide my strength from them.

In most Murim organizations, the best leaders weren't the best kind of people. The best leaders were usually cold and skillful, so that they were able to protect their subordinates. These leaders were the best type.

"I know that you've all heard different things about me."

There were so many different rumors flying around about me that I'd stopped caring.

"There's only one thing I want to say to you; never forget it. From now on, I want you all to see my strength, and evaluate it for yourself."

"“Yes, we understand!””

Their voices were full of excitement. They could tell from our first meeting that I was different than what I'd been described as in the rumors.

Since I was someone who had the most subordinates in all of Kang Ho, this was the first time that I was actually interacting this closely with my subordinates. Since I'd been the Strongest Under the Heavens before I'd become the Mengju in my past life, I hadn't had the time nor the need to closely interact with them.

Could I actually lead them well? Even I felt nervous about this.

If teaching Kwang Du martial arts was my first time teaching someone, then this was going to be my first time leading my subordinates personally.

“I’ll never forget about our meeting today.”

They might think that this was just another pep talk that I was saying, but it truly came from the bottom of my heart.

Today will go down in history as my beginning.

“Now then. I’ll pick the chief.”

Everyone was nervous, as this would most likely affect their daily life.

I walked up to one of the youths.

“Kwan He.”

“Yes!”

He was someone that I had on mind.

He was twenty three, and had previously worked as an instructor for a martial arts school. Thus, his foundations were very solid.

However, the thing that had caught my attention was his reason for joining.

“Why do you want to enter our sword sect?”

“Because I want to become a successful martial artist.”

“And you think that you’ll be able to become successful by joining our Lesser Sword Sect?”

“...can I tell you the truth?”

“Of course.”

“I’ve heard about you. About how you’re a ‘changed’ young master. About how you went from being a terrible person to a pretty decent one. The truth is, I want to learn your secret. I believe that I’ll definitely become a successful martial artist if I learn from you.”

It was both a rash and bold statement.

But that wasn’t everything. He had a solid foundation, considering the fact that he was only twenty-three, and he’d answered the other interview questions really well. He’d gone

straight to the point, without saying anything unnecessary.

“You are now the chief of the Lesser Sword Sect. Do you think that you’ll be able to do it?”

“Yes, sect leader! Please trust me!”

Kwan He answered without any hesitation.

“Good! That’s it for today then.”

I took them around and assigned them living quarters. There was plenty of living space available still. When our Clan was at its peak, many more people had lived here.

When I left the living quarters, Kwang Du was waiting for me.

“How does it feel?”

What could I say to describe how I felt?

“Let’s have a drink.”

Just like how my father had drink with Seo Jung, I drank with Kwang Du late into the night.

This was an excellent start.

The next day, I began to lay down the structure for the Lesser Sword Sect. I was only able to plan everything due to the advice that Seo Jung had given me.

Since everyone already had their own techniques, I only had to lead them down the right path to ensure that they were able to fully utilize their strength.

I made sure that they were clear about how rewards and punishments worked. This was one of the most important aspects of leading a sect.

If they made vast improvements, I'd compliment them and reward them with either gold or a weapon. On the other hand, if they fell behind in their training, I was going to punish them. But I wouldn't do anything to humiliate them. It would only be to make them train harder and become an even stronger martial artist.

When I finished setting up this system, the mood of the recruits became better.

Through my experience, the most important thing for a sect was structure. Many sects fail simply because they don't have a proper structure to nurture their subordinates with.

While training them, I ensured that I didn't neglect my own training.

I'll never forget that the most important thing is myself.

I knew that, if I fell, everything would end in an instant.

No matter how strong my Sect becomes, everything will end in an instant if I die.

I began to recall countless fights from my previous life. No matter how well trained and disciplined a group was, when you cut off its head it crumbles easily.

As such, I have to get stronger; not just for myself, but for all of them too.

“Why is your physique so amazing?”

Kwan He, who I was currently training with, asked me whilst gasping for breath.

“If you wake up at dawn and both run and train for about an hour every day, you can achieve this level of physique.”

“You train your body for an hour every day?”

“If you want to be successful in life, you have to devote an endless amount of time and effort into whatever you wish to achieve.”

“Devote an endless amount of effort? What do you mean?”

“There must be a time, every day, where you focus as much as possible on one thing that you’re devoted to, and put everything you have into it. Then, when you look back on it, you’ll be able to think about that time when you devoted everything to it. You said that you wanted to become a successful martial artist, right? Then put endless time and effort into it. The more you devote yourself, the greater the reward will be.”

Kwang He’s eyes lit up. I knew that he was going to start running in the mornings from now on.

“Thank you.”

He bowed to me and left.

I gazed at his back with a smile on my face as he left. After he’d left, Kwang Du came up to me.

“Aren’t you being too friendly with him?”

“What?”

“What you said earlier; you never said anything like that to me.”

“I didn’t?”

Kwang Du gave me a jealous look.

“You’re too much.”

“Are you jealous?”

I think I’ve hit a nerve.

“Jealous? I’m a man! I’m a real man who does everything!”

“Don’t worry. Look at how serious he is.”

“Do you mean that if I become serious...”

I turned around and left without saying replying. I already knew what sort of expression Kwang Du would make.

“You know what, young master? You’ve changed! A lot!”

I planned to make Kwang Du compete with Kwan He.

The friendlier one becomes with another, the more relaxed they are around each other. And because of that, accidents are bound to happen. Thus, no matter how close they were to each other, it would be beneficial to have some competition amongst them.

Being forced to compete with Kwan He would make Kwang Du

stronger.

Being able to improve themselves would be beneficial for everyone.

The next morning, Kwan He started to train in the morning just like I'd expected. Since he'd been dissatisfied with himself during the group training, he'd decided to start training on his own.

I knew what type of person Kwan He was. He had a strong will and a fire in his eyes. In addition, he was striving to become a better chief.

My other prediction was also right.

Kwang Du also came out to train.

I had a small smile as I watched them train.

Yes, become crazy. You can only become successful at something if you become crazy for it.

Three days after Kwan He had started training in the morning, another person from the Lesser Sword Sect joined. Two days after that, another two joined.

It seems that, because of Kwan He, the Lesser Sword Sect's atmosphere had become better.

Everything was going the way I wanted it to. That was, except for our finances.

Currently, I only had three thousand five hundred nyang left. Considering how much I needed in order to maintain the lesser sword sect, I wasn't in a position where I could just sit around.

While I was deep in thought about our financial problems, Elder Jong visited.

I knew that he'd only visit me if he had something to say to me.

"How's it going with your new lesser sword sect? You're not wasting any money, right?"

"How could I not if I've never had any experience with money?!"

"I knew it."

Even though he might seem cold, he was softer than before.

"It isn't easy both feeding and taking care of all these people, is it?"

“Now that I’m leading them, I’ve realized that it isn’t as easy as it looks.”

He proceeded to tell me various things. He could’ve said it nicer, and in a faster manner, but he had to drag things on and said unnecessary things. When I heard what he was saying, I felt like I’d become a pile of bone.

Then he answered the question that I’d asked him a while back.

“You asked me about it I had a disciple or something, right?”

This was something that I’d asked him quite a while ago.

“Do you still need someone?”

I could tell that this was the real reason that he’d come here.

“Of course.”

“I know someone who might be suitable...”

“Who?”

“He might be useless, but...”

I knew that they wouldn’t be. Since Elder Jong was willing to

personally introduce him, he was bound to be an excellent person.

“Go to Fort Chu and ask for someone named Kong Su Chan.”

Fort Chu was located to the north of us.

“Thank you.”

He left right after saying, “Make sure you save some money.”

The next morning, I took Kwang Du, and left for Fort Chu.

“If Chief Kwan catches up to me because I missed my practice today, it’s your fault young master.”

“Are you worried?”

“Of course. It’s said that the hunting dog is boiled and eaten after the rabbit has been hunted down by it.”

“Ha ha.”

“You should be saying no! Why are you laughing?”

You punk, don’t worry. The martial arts that most people use aren’t comparable to the The Seven Stances of the North Sea. You just don’t have any real experience. You’re already stronger than

most members of this sect.

Before leaving, I bought him a martial artist's robe.

"I'm buying this for you since you've been training diligently."

With a large smile, Kwang Du said, "Thank you. Thank you very much, young master."

As he was hopping with joy, I told him that I'd bought him a lighter colored robe than mine.

"This robe is too good to wear. I'm going to hang it in my room!"

"Is it really that good?"

"This is the first time I've ever received a robe as a gift."

Even though he moved my heart, I didn't show it. So he first shared a drink with me, had first shared a room with me, and now had, had even received his first gift of clothing from me.

Yes. I'll help you do things that you've never done before.

I'll let you experience everything that you want to.

"By the way, who are we going to meet?"

“Someone who’ll take care of our finances from now on.”

“Ah! So they’re an important person!”

Yep, they’re a very important person.

I was also curious about the person that elder Jong had recommended.

Chapter 29: My Beginning Is (5)

Kwang Du lowered his voice and remarked, “Considering that it is someone who is going to be our financial officer, his house seems a bit run-down.”

This place was really about to fall down at any moment. It seemed as if I found the wrong place.

“It’s all right if the person inside is reliable. Go call him.”

“Yes”

Kwang Du used a loud voice, “Is anyone inside?”

Then a man in his mid-thirties opened the door. He was tall and skinny, unshaved with unkempt hair. He had the look of a homeless middle-aged man.

Kwang Du quickly whispered in my ear.

“I think this person is also a bit run-down.”

I comforted him by saying “All we need is for his head to be in good shape.”

“Are you teacher Kong?”

“Teacher? What teacher? But I am Mr. Kong. Why did you come here?”

“Elder Jong from the Byuk clan recommended you to us.”

Kong Su Chan was a bit surprised. He would have never expected that Elder Jong introduced him to us.

“Come in, please”

We entered a small room. This room had books lying around everywhere.

“Excuse me but may I ask you what your relation is to Elder Jong?”

“He is my master”

Kwang Du and I were both surprised. Never had we expected that someone like Elder Jong would raise a disciple.

“How is my master?”

“He is well.”

“That is good. But why have you come here?”

“I am the heir of the Byuk Clan, Byuk Lee Dan and I need a financial officer, so I came to see you.”

He questioned me with an unexpected expression.

“So you want me to become your financial officer?”

“Yes, since your master recommended you.”

“Did my master tell you why I live in slum like this?”

“No.”

“So that’s how it is...”

“Everyone has their own secrets and problems.”

I didn’t question him but he said it anyway.

“I killed a person. I killed the person who hired me.”

He got up from his seat. It seemed as if he didn’t want to talk anymore.

“Please return home. I will not see you out.”

“I don’t think that will be necessary. I am not a weak person that will go down after getting hit a few times.” I stared at the confused Kong Su Chan and said, “I am sure he was someone who deserved to die.”

If not, he wouldn’t be in a place like this. If he killed someone innocent, he would be atoning for his crime somewhere else. And he would never admit something like this with his own lips.

“How was your previous master?”

He never expected me to say something like this. He answered me with a dazed expression.

“He was someone who deserved to die.”

“Then you did well by killing him.”

“Do you mean you don’t care about what happened?”

“Yes.”

“This is the first time. Everyone else criticized me after I said I killed a man.”

“It wouldn’t be a problem for me. But I have a question for you.”

“What is it?”

“Are you ready to start your work?”

After some silence he replied, “You trust me?”

I shook my head.

“It would be a lie if I told you I trust you since I don’t know anything about you.”

“Then why do you want to bring me with you?”

“Because I trust the person who recommended you to me.”

On top of that I trusted in my fate. Since Elder Jong personally came to me and told me about this person, I knew that this was fate.

“Will you come with me?”

“Let me ask you something as well?”

“Ask as much as you want.”

“What is the goal that you are trying to achieve?”

“To make the Byuk Clan the number one clan in all of the Central Plains.”

There was a moment of silence again.

Then Kong Su Chan said with a fire in his eyes, “I will come to you tomorrow with my things.”

“Thank you.”

After we got outside Kwang Du said something, “It seemed as if he caught your attention.”

“Refreshing, isn’t it? A financial official who reeks of blood.”

“Anyway, he needs to be good at his job, right?”

“Will he be though?”

“What?”

“He is an interesting one. He didn’t ask me what his pay was or where he will live but he asked me what my goal was.”

“Then why did you pick someone like him?”

“If my goal was to become the strongest in San Dong then I would most likely need a reasonable financial officer. But since my goal is the Central Plains I need a financial officer like him.”

Kwang Du acquiesced and said, “It’s hard.”

“There is nothing hard about it. If he is not cut out for it we just need to fire him and get another financial officer.”

“But that’s so cold.”

“It’s cool-headed.”

I didn’t even start my grand plan yet.

I knew what it meant to contest against those who were driven mad by power. It wasn’t something that people who follow a dream could contest against. They will crush anything that comes their way and trample on any dream.

To defeat them I must become colder and calmer than them.

The next morning Kong Su Chan arrived in front of the Byuk Clan’s gate with all his belongings.

After taking a bath, putting on new robes, being cleanly shaven and getting a haircut he looked a whole different person.

While he was unpacking his things Elder Jong came in.

“So you came?”

Kong Su Chan gave a bow to his master.

“It’s been a while.”

Through this I could tell that something happened between these two.

But all business aside the look that Elder Jong had on his face was a kind look that was welcoming his disciple that he hadn’t seen in ages.

Then Elder Jong told me, “Bring some wine.”

“Yes, of course.”

I could tell that he was thanking me for accepting his disciple.

It was beneficial for the Byuk Clan to accept Kong Su Chan during peaceful times like this since no one knows what the future might entail.

Since it was some time since they last met I was expecting them

to talk a bit. But Elder Jong just said these words and left, “The person who will become your master is lacking in many ways. So, you must pay extra attention.”

He said it as if he was saying it to me.

This stinking old man.

I said while laughing, “Yes, it is as you heard, I am lacking in many ways.”

Then I handed him three thousand nyang.

“With this amount of money I need to run this Sword Sect. And of course, your wage is included in this.”

“Yes, I understand.”

He didn’t make any worried expression.

“Will you be all right?”

“You called me since you were in a tight spot, right?”

I liked his attitude. Rather than saying something negative he showed a confident attitude.

“In the future I am going to need more money.”

“I will do my best.”

“Thank you. I will trust that you will.”

I made my own sword sect and hired a financial officer who will take care of all finances.

Twenty martial artists and one financial officer.

This was a laughable number.

But the most important thing was that I have now started on my path.

There were news about the appointment of the new Mengju in the Murim Alliance.

It was said that they only sent invitation to the important clans of the Central Plains. The Yang Clan, the Song Clan and a few other clans got an invitation but our clan didn't get one. This showed the sad reality of our clan.

If I hadn't met with Kal Sa Ryang and Baek Pyo the other night I would have done everything to attend this ceremony.

But now I wasn't interested in it since I knew that Baek Pyo will be running his new shop and Kal Sa Ryun will be fine on his own.

After dinner I went to see my father. Even though he might not show it I knew he was a bit bitter on the inside.

I understand the heart of the clan heads. He was disappointed about the fact that he didn't receive an invitation like usual.

"Father, do you want to have a drink with me?"

I shook the bottle that I prepared beforehand. And father made a surprised expression. This was the first time that Byuk Lee Dan had ever done something like this.

"Since we are going to drink let's go out and have a drink."

"Sounds good."

So we went to the middle of the garden and sat down. It was the perfect weather in fall.

I poured him a drink and I received a drink from him.

"Now, let's cheer."

I toasted with him.

This was the first time for me. Having a drink with a father like this. It was a strange feeling.

“So how is your Sword Sect doing?”

“I think we are off to a decent start”

“It is not easy managing people. You should never disrespect your subordinates and you should get in the habit of looking at things from their perspective.”

“I will never forget that advice.”

Then father emptied his cup and I followed suit. Even though I usually don't like the taste of alcohol I rather enjoyed it today.

While drinking we talked about various things but I never brought up anything about the invitation. I knew that drinking like this was the best way to comfort him.

A month later Kong Su Chan came to see me

“What is it?”

“With the money that you gave me I invested around two

thousand nyang to various places.”

Then he pulled out a paper. It showed how much he invested in the different places.

There were two types of investments. The long-term investments and the short-term investments.

Usually most merchants spend the money that they earn but there are times when they take money from an investor and pay them back after they make a profit. This was a high-risk, high-reward business.

But what he showed me were only short term investments.

“This one is an investment in a merchant.”

“So how much did you earn?”

“I invested four hundred Nyang and made a hundred fifty nyang profit.”

“Oh! Not bad.”

“The result of my other investments will come back in a month or so. And the expected profit is around four hundred nyang.”

Investing two thousand nyang and making a five hundred nyang profit in three months was a pretty good achievement.

Even though he may be strange he showed with his skills that he was a good financial officer. And investing like this from the start showed that he was well-versed in investing and informed in the business world.

But the thing that I liked the most was that he never took any risky investment. He could have made a risky investment to look good in front of me but he didn't do that.

“Even though I invested in only three places this time. I will slowly expand our investments.”

“I am not very knowledgeable in this field. Please do as you see fit. But you must report everything to me.”

“Of course. But you know, there are other ways to make money.”

“Like what other ways?”

“There are times when merchants need martial artists. They might need security or manpower.”

This was a way for a Murim-In to earn money. Usually they are hired by various people and organizations in the city.

Aside from the big organizations, it was hard for small sects and clans to support themselves with only this sort of work. So most of them usually start a business by making agreements with other merchants and other groups.

I was sure Byuk Clan would most likely be involved in this sort of work.

“I understand. However we still need time to grow. I will tell you when we are ready.”

“Yes, I understand.”

And training the Sword Sect continued.

Kwan He kept the mood very good. He did everything with dedication and took initiatives. And there weren't any complaints about him being too young to lead.

Since our Sword Sect was running smoothly the main Sword Sect started getting influenced by us. Since there have been talks that the secondary sword sect was practicing hard it made the main sword sect under pressure to practice hard as well.

Yes, they now have competition that they have to worry about since our sword sect might overtake them.

Two months passed since the Sword Sect was created.

There were talks about changes in the Murim world.

Some of the older leaders retired and new leaders were instated. The new chancellor was Sa Ma Chun, was someone who had a close relation with the Heavenly Dao Gate for a long time.

There weren't any news about what happened to Kal Sa Ryang. He most likely would have been demoted and working somewhere else.

But I wasn't worried about him because I knew that he will hold out on his own.

I wanted to make Kal Sa Ryang and Baek Pyo my people again. But if they don't want to follow me I will not force them. I am sure that if I become the person who they could share their dream with they would join me again.

But to do that I must become stronger. And my Sword Sect must also get stronger. It is said that the first step was the most important. Everything else in the Sword Sect will be influenced by my growth.

Thanks to the two months of training everyone in the Sword Sect made massive improvements. Especially those who took extra time to train in the morning.

I believed it was now time for me to act, so I called Kwan He.

“Chief Kwan.”

“Yes, Sect Master.”

I could see the fire in his eyes.

“It’s time now.”

It was time to experience real battle.

“Gather everyone.”

Chapter 30: Into The Summer (1)

Kong Su Chan gave me some missions that I could give to the Lesser Sword Sect for them to get some real experience.

“I’ve just received a mission for us. The Tae Ju Merchant Guild from the Kang So Fortress arrived here a couple of days ago to make a trade. However, it seems like they’ve had some sort of conflict with the Tae An Armed Escort Agency. They went to other escort agencies, but it seems like they weren’t able to find a decent one.”

“Aren’t there other escort agencies in the area?”

“Usually, armed escort agencies fight each other like cats and dogs. However, when it’s necessary for them to help each other, they’re like brothers.”

“So they’re siding with the Tae An Escort Agency.”

“Yes, that’s what it seems like. It seems the Tae Ju merchants didn’t have any time to waste, as they’ve offered us quite a bit.”

“How much?”

“Two thousand Nyang.”

It seems like they were carrying something valuable.

“However, it might get a little dangerous.”

I would've declined this mission if I was going to send them alone. However, since it was their first real experience, I'd decided to follow them.

“Alright. We'll accept the mission.”

Afterwards, I went to the blacksmith and bought twenty swords that were in-stock. Usually, I'd order personally crafted weapons, but since we were short on time, I had to do what I could to acquire weapons for us.

Even though I wasn't showing it, I was also a bit nervous.

The next day, we loaded up the Tae Ju merchants' merchandise into three different carriages.

We didn't hire a driver, since there was someone in the Lesser Sword Sect who had experience in driving carriages.

After all the preparations had been completed, one of the merchants came up to me and said, “I heard that this isn't the Sword Sect of the Byuk Clan, but a subsidiary one.”

Before they'd hired us, I'd made it clear to them that we were the Lesser Sword Sect of Byuk Clan.

“Yes, we're the subsidiary one.”

“There are precious items in there. Please make sure to take care of them well.”

They'd hired us since they didn't have much time, but it seems that they don't trust us.

“Don't worry. It will arrive without any damage.”

“Then, it will be in your care.”

But how could his worries be comparable to my parents'? My parents' worries were as large as Mt. Tai.

I'd calmly persuaded them by saying these two things: I can't be a frog forever looking up from the bottom of a well, and I can't live like a bird in a golden cage.

But I also can't babysit the sect forever. They need to go outside and experience real combat for themselves. It's said that it's a hundred times more efficient to experience a real-life battle than to practice by yourself all day.

Our mission was to deliver the merchandise to the Tae Ju

merchant guild, which was located in Kang So Fortress. And the time-limit that we were given was only ten days.

We started off casually.

There was five people in each carriage, with the rest of us on guard duty.

I took Kwang Du with me without question. Since he didn't know how to ride a horse yet, I personally drove the first carriage with Kwang Du sitting next to me.

“Is it alright for me to follow you?” Kwang Du carefully asked me. It seems that he's worried because of the others from the Sect.

“Definitely., Aren't you my right hand?”

“Right?”

He seemed a bit relieved since I'd called him my right-hand man. These days, Kwang Du was very cognitive of Kwan He.

When Kwan He ordered the sect they moved with order and discipline.

Watching him, Kwang Du whispered into my ear, “He seems like

an elder brother, even though he's two years younger than me."

"I think so too."

"No, how could you agree with something like that? I threw away my adulthood to make you happier!"

"Ha ha ha."

Yeah, yeah, I'll confess that I'm happier because you did that.

Kwan He was also conscious of Kwang Du. However, even though he was just naturally reacting to Kwang Du's wariness, he also wanted to gain my trust.

Because of Kwang Du, Kwan He will make a conscious effort to not make any mistakes. And Kwang Du will also do his best to do the same.

This sort of development was exactly what I wanted.

Nothing happened for a few days.

We'd usually camp outside in the woods.

At night time, four people would be on guard duty at a time. Kwan He determined the order and the time.

I believed that this process would lay the groundwork for our sect.

I could raise my cultivation instantaneously with elixir and medicines, but these sort of bonds could only be built up with time and experience. Experiencing these sort of things was leaps and bound ahead than just hearing about it. It would only help you if you personally experience it.

Deep into our trip, when we'd become more lax, a group of bandits approached us from the front.

There were around thirty people wearing masks.

Someone who seemed to be their leader coldly said, "If you hand over everything you own, we'll let you live."

It seems like they aren't your ordinary bandits.

They were confident. As such, they hadn't ambushed us at night, and had instead waited for our approach. However, this was beneficial to us.

"Prepare for battle! Set up a perimeter like you were trained."

Hearing my commands, everyone moved rapidly. There were many different formation that they'd practiced. However, at times like these, where all of the enemies were in front of you, it was best to use a V formation where your strongest point was at the front and your weakest point was at the end.

The bandit leader immediately gave the command to attack.

“Attack!”

All of the bandits rushed forward.

Normally, I would've left everything to them, but since they outnumbered us, and their skills were comparable to ours, I decided to take the initiative.

Swish Swish Swish Swish Swish!

Five bandits fell from hidden weapons that I'd thrown at them.

Not only did it decrease their numbers, but it also decreased their moral.

As a result, the bandits became a bit hesitant. When this happened, I gave my order.

“Attack!”

Everything happened in an instant, but our side had a higher moral.

“Chief Kwan take the left, Kwang Du take the right! Just do as you were taught!”

I was in the middle to face their leader.

I didn't use my Ashura Soul-Chasing Sword technique, but used the clan's Brightmoon Sword technique to face him.

Swoosh!

Whilst dodging his sword, I raised my own. I was going to end this as quickly as possible. However, their leader moved faster than I'd expected. But, since I'd anticipated his next move, I was able to get a vital hit in on him.

Swoosh!

Chop!

I was able to deliver a clean strike to his side, causing blood to start running out.

As he was falling to the side, he released a large amount of killing intent.

Clash!

He tried to rush at me with his killing intent, but...

Stab!

I stabbed him in the heart. As he was dying, his face was filled with disbelief, as he'd never expected this to happen. I turned around after pulling my sword out of his chest. Everything that was currently happening on the battlefield came into my field of vision. Since I'd lived most of my past life in battle, I'd experienced all sorts of things. I was able to instantly tell who was in the most dangerous situation.

Swish!

A hidden dart from my hand went flying.

Stab!

It found its mark as it buried itself in the back of a bandit who was about to stab one of our side's member. I immediately rushed towards the next most-dangerous location.

One of two bandits who was facing one of the sect members turned his attention towards me.

“Who dares!”

He slashed his sword at me wildly.

Unfortunately, he’d encountered me. I was someone completely out of his league.

I easily dodged his sword and returned the blow.

Stab!

My sword easily penetrated his heart.

At the same time, I infused my energy into my voice as I yelled, “Wake up!”

The sect member who’d been dazed from being assaulted regained his focus, then went to help his comrades.

After he left, I scanned the battlefield once again.

Kwang Du had already dispatched three people, while Kwan He had dispatched two. The rest were fighting in a state of chaos.

We had the advantage thanks to Kwang Du and Kwan He’s performance. Thus, I slowly took down the bandits as I walked through the battlefield.

The balance of the battle tilted once I joined the fight. A bandit fell every single time I slashed my sword. I was utilizing the Brightmoon Sword Technique at its maximum potential.

The one who took down the last bandit was Kwang Du.

Stab!

This was the fourth enemy that he'd killed. This might've been the first time that he'd killed someone, but he'd been able to kill four. Even without properly cultivating it, this sort of result was only possible due to the Seven Stances of the North Sea. His hand shook as he gripped his bloody sword.

I observed the rest of the Sect.

“Is there anyone else that's injured?”

There were a few who had cuts on their arm and legs, but luckily no one had been gravely injured. This was mostly because I'd intervened rather quickly.

“Hurry up and patch up your wounds. The rest of you who are fine are on guard duty!”

Receiving my orders, everyone acted quickly. No one was in their right state of mind. Even though there were a few who'd

encountered battles like this, for most of them, this had been their first battle. There were even some like Kwang Du, where this was their first time killing a person. This was even Kwan He's first time killing a person.

After tending to the injured, I gathered them up again.

“Is everyone alright?”

“Yes.”

I asked Kwang Du first.

“This was your first time killing someone, right?”

“Yes.”

His voice was shaking. His hands and clothes were covered in blood. It seems like he couldn't get over the fact that he'd killed someone.

“Kwang Du-Ya.”

“Yes.”

“Look behind you.”

He turned around.

“If you hadn’t killed those four, then four of those standing there might have died.”

Everyone was looking at Kwang Du in a new light. They’d all thought that he was just a servant who ran errands for the young master; never had they expected this sort of performance from him. Their thankful gaze met with his.

“I know that it’s hard to get over it, but both to become a Kang Ho-In, and for your comrades, you must let some of your righteousness go, and dirty your hands. You might think that everyone is a Kang Ho-In if they simply wear a sword, but the real Kang Ho-In are those who embrace this, and overcome the difficulties it brings. Kwang Du-Ya, do you want to be a real Kang Ho-In?”

After taking a deep breath, Kwang Du replied, “Yes, I want to become a real Kang Ho-In.”

“You did well today. Thank You.”

“Young master... thank you.”

How could he not know of my feelings. He knew that I was saying this to comfort him, so that he wouldn’t burden himself further.

Afterwards, I called Kwan He over.

“Are you alright?”

“Yes.”

Since he'd heard my speech to Kwang Du, his eyes were full of life.

“This is something that everyone has to go through, and something that everyone will keep going through in the future. Now then, everyone, look at those that are beside you.”

Everyone looked at one another.

“All of you fought well. You were able to protect your comrades next to you because all of you fought well. You should say a thing or two to your comrades.”

When I said this, everyone started thanking one another. Afterwards, I made one final statement.

“Thank you all for getting through this without dying. I'm proud of you all.”

It seems that everyone was moved by my speech. Since they'd all seen how strong I was, they all seemed to see me in a new light.

“Thank you, sect master!”

“Hurray for the Lesser Sword Sect!”

While this was our first victory, it was also a chance for me to reaffirm myself with them.

After things had calmed down, I told the Sect Members to search the corpses, and look for faces that seemed familiar.

One of the members suddenly yelled, “Aren’t they the Beast Squad?!”

“The Beast Squad?”

“Yes. They’re a group of bandits who only target expensive cargo. They’re very famous in San Dong.”

Everyone was surprised.

“It can’t be. The bandits that we killed were the Beast Squad?”

“Oh my! I can’t believe it!”

It seems like the Beast Squad were a pretty famous group of bandits. Because of them, many Armed Escort Agencies had lost their lives.

“They most likely have a bounty on their head.”

“How much do you think?”

“A couple of thousand nyang, I assume.”

“Ha ha, then we’re in luck.”

There weren’t any other attacks following that of the Beast Squad’s.

We delivered the cargo safely, and received our payment of two thousand nyang.

Afterwards, we went to the nearest Murim office and verified the bodies. It didn’t take too long to verify the bodies, considering we had the corpse of their leader as well.

From this, we were able to receive seven thousand extra Nyang. We received five thousand nyang for the leader, and two thousand for the rest of the bandits combined.

We’d left to get two thousand nyang, but seven thousand nyang had simply followed us. We were able to earn nine thousand nyang in one fell swoop.

I paid everyone thirty extra nyang in addition to their promised share. I also gave fifty extra nyang to Kwang Du and Kwan He for their excellent performance. Everyone was happy.

Money is important, but people are even more important.

When we returned back home after finishing the mission without a hitch, the status of the Lesser Sword Sect went up. No one could believe what we'd actually accomplished it when it was revealed that the bandits who'd raided us were the notorious Beast Squad.

Besides a couple hundred nyang that I set aside for myself, I decided to give the rest to Kong Su Chan.

“Here's eight thousand nyang. Please use invest it for us.”

After a moment of silence, Kong Su Chan asked me something.

“Why do you trust me this much? Is it because of my teacher?”

“At first, yes. However, that isn't the case anymore.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“It's fate. I trust in my fate that my financial officer isn't someone who'll run off with all my money.”

“Thank you.”

As he was about to leave, he stopped and said something.

“I’ll ask you this question again someday. However, next time... I want to hear from you that it’s because you trust me.”

I gave him a light smile.

As he was walking away, there was a light haze around him.

The sunlight was slowly getting hotter.

This will be the first summer since my rebirth.

Chapter 31: Into The Summer (2)

From the small window of his small office, Kal Sa Ryang stared blankly at the practice ground. This room was only five pyung wide and was filled by bookshelves and books. This place, which was where the regular advisors would work, was considerably smaller compared to his previous office when he was still the chancellor. He was demoted from his position as a chancellor into a regular advisor. And there were eight other advisors like him. But he wasn't someone that was going to stay idle.

Suddenly someone opened the door and came in, "What are you staring at?"

Kal Sa Ryung abruptly got up his seat, "Have you arrived, sir?"

The person who entered the room was the new Chancellor, Sa Ma Cheon. He walked next to Kal Sa Ryang and stared out the small window. The empty practice ground was only full of heat.

"The weather is getting warm."

"Yes, I believe it will be a relatively hot summer."

"You can never know someone's fate. Remember a long time ago when I used to wait hours just to see you. After all that waiting, do you remember how long you would actually meet with me for?"

Kal Sa Ryang didn't reply.

“It was only quarter of an hour. After making me wait for hours you only met with me for fifteen minutes.”

Kal Sa Ryang wasn't saying anything but he remembered everything clearly. Back then when Sa Ma Chun visited him on behalf of the Heavenly Dao Gate, it was about the right of Heavenly Dao Gate's new business. Sa Ma Chun was even bribing him for the right. It was enough to buy multiple large gardens. But why would Sa Ma Chun even use this sort of scheme when Sa Ma Chun clearly knew that Kal Sa Ryang was not the type to take bribes? Did Sa Ma Chun really believe that Kal Sa Ryang would take the bribe if it was big enough? Kal Sa Ryang remembered dismissing Sa Ma Chun rather quickly because he was mad.

“I am sorry about what happened back then. I was so busy that I made a mistake.”

Sa Ma Chun showed his yellow teeth as he smiled.

“Ha ha ha. I understand how you feel. Now that I am here I know how busy it is.”

“I am very grateful for your generosity.”

“Did you know that if it weren't for me, after revealing that you were going to stay you might have gotten kicked out?”

“Of course, how could I not know? I am truly grateful for what

you did.”

“Why did you decide to stay? Did you stay so that you can take revenge on me?”

Sa Ma Chun’s glaze became sharper and Kal Sa Ryung’s expression grew darker.

“Why would I even do something like that? I...”

Full of emotion Kal Sa Ryang couldn’t finish his sentence.

In a low voice he said, “I lived in the Murim Alliance for my whole life. I have never thought about living elsewhere. Even in this situation I am happy that I can still be of use to the Alliance.”

After staring at Kal Sa Ryung he said, “Yes, I understand how you feel. If I was in your shoes I would feel the same. I look forward to working together.”

“That is what I was going to say. I will give it my all.”

“Ha Ha Ha. Good, very good.”

After that Sa Ma Chun left the office and Kal Sa Ryang regained his calm and made a small smile. This was something funny since he was tired of the Alliance now. He wanted to live his life like Baek Pyo. But he couldn’t leave because there was something he

had to do. I am certain that Mengju-nim was assassinated. The betrayal of the Moonlight Sect and the Iron Calvary Sect couldn't have happened overnight. This was something that happened over years of planning and scheming just for the death of the Mengju-nim. They would have used some sort of a method that not even godly doctor could find out, or maybe even the godly doctor was on their side.

He was going to find out. Find out who killed the Mengju, and once he finds out he will seek revenge. He could never forgive those who trampled on the work that he dedicated his entire life for. But what he could forgive even less are those who assassinated the Mengju who gave his life to bring peace to Kang Ho.

Kal Sa Ryang already knew that Sa Ma Chun didn't trust him. He knew that he was like a thorn in Sa Ma Chun's side. It was easier to eliminate the previous chancellor but Sa Ma Chun didn't do so because there was some value in keeping him. Sa Ma Chun knew about the resources and network that Kal Sa Ryang had at his disposal and also Ma Bong Gi had replaced all the sect masters that opposed him. Which made Kal Sa Ryang a toothless and clawless tiger. But Kal Sa Ryang didn't feel any danger.

He knew he was going to be used for a while. Yes, I will be used by you for a bit. Just like they had done, he was going to take his time. First, he was going to find out what happened, then he would gather enough power to defeat them. It didn't matter how long it took, but he was going to hold out until then.

He looked around his office once more, "...This is not so bad."

After returning from the mission Kwang Du changed. He started to pay more attention to his clothing.

“Do you think this will go well with me?”

“Isn’t that the martial artist robe that I picked for you?”

“I should have picked one that had color similar to yours.”

“Didn’t you buy that because you respect me?”

“It was a mistake.”

The reason for his change was made clear. During the process of killing the four bandits, Kwang Du was able to save one member of the sect. Now that I look back, the one he saved was one of the two female by the name Do Soon. She was twenty one and was cute and lovely. The reason for this change was because she gifted him a practice sword and a wet stone for his sword. It was an ordinary item that most martial artists exchange.

“This isn’t some normal gift.”

“Don’t you think she gave them to you out of gratitude?”

“Your jokes are too much. I am very serious person.”

It was true Kwang Du was more serious than ever.

“What kind of gift should I give her?”

“Why? It was a gift of appreciation for saving her life.”

“Since I received one I must give her one.”

“You just want an excuse to have a chat with her right?”

Kwang Du flinched.

“No. It’s just common courtesy and manners.”

“Hu Hu Hu.”

“It’s not what you think.”

Why is it not. Your face is red like an apple.

How would I not know his feelings, he was twenty five. How could his heart not be flustered? Hey punk, do your best. But thankfully Kwang Du was able to reach out to his first love without much trouble.

Next day Kwan He and seven other members of the sect came to see me.

“We would also like to learn throwing techniques.”

It seemed that they were moved by my throwing technique that I used on the bandits. The ones gathered here were the ones that wanted to learn throwing techniques and the one who gathered them up was probably Kwan He.

“Even though I am not an expert at throwing techniques I can teach you the basics.”

All martial arts lead to one road. Since I mastered the Sword Art I can easily master other arts. Even though it may not be to the degree of sword art I can still master throwing arts, spear arts, and other arts.

I told the others to bring some practice targets and some throwing knives. I set up the targets and lined them up in front of them.

“There are some experts in Kang Ho who mastered the art of throwing weapons. Actually they are quite scary opponents. Just think about it. What would happen if they, who can snipe a small target from a hundred meter away, throw multiple blades at you? Wouldn't they be able to hit multiple vital areas? What if they can even predict where you are going to move next?”

They all nodded their head as if they were all scared.

“Of course it takes years to get to that level. But there are disadvantages to it. They are the weakest at close combat. They wouldn’t be able to do anything if their opponent give off even slightest sword ki.”

But there was an expert whom I fought against that was able to give off their ki through his throwing weapons. He was one of the Blood Heaven Sect grand elders, Kwang Hu. He was truly a difficult opponent to deal with. Once he made a throwing gesture at least ten blades came at me. Later I became really curious where all those blades came from and where he was keeping all his blades. But he truly was an expert who was able to infuse his ki into his blades.

I still remember that fight to this day since it was one of my most difficult fights. Once I finally took him down I had at least three blades stuck in my body. But to train to that level was truly hard. Throwing Art may seem easy at first but the deeper you go into it the harder it becomes.

“For you mastering it to the degree where it saves your life is enough.”

“Yes. That is all that we wish for.”

Kwan He replied with a loud voice and everyone else nodded.

And I started to teach them the basic of throwing techniques. How to hold the weapon. How to breathe. How to aim and throw.

“Now throw!”

Everyone threw their weapon at the practice target. Most of them missed their mark but Kwan He was able to hit its edge.

“Concentrate. For throwing techniques, concentration is key.”

“Yes.”

Everyone picked up another pair of blades and practiced. They became more proficient with every throw. It was beneficial for a martial artist to be able to handle a throwing weapon.

“After hitting the target three times from thirty paces away I will teach you the next step.”

“Thank you sect master.”

“No need to be thankful. I just want to help you all improve. I like people who strive for improvement. You can look for me any time you have any question.”

“Yes!”

After their thunderous response, the members of the sect resumed their training. About half an hour later I started correcting their posture and form. ‘Isn’t it troublesome instructing others?’

‘Never!’

Maybe it was because I have never taught anyone before, but it was a pretty good feeling teaching others. Furthermore, it was helping me in my training. Since I was someone who reached the peak, helping others allowed me look back at my foundation, which allowed me to think about many things.

For example.

“This is how it’s done.”

There are some days when I spend the whole night recalling the instructions that I gave.

‘Is that really how it’s done?’

It made me think about some aspects that I have never thought about before and made me curious. As I have never taught anyone I didn’t know how this will affect me. But since I put my all into teaching, I knew the results would be good.

Since I didn’t see Kwang Du for the whole day I was curious and went to his room. He was sitting down at a table writing something

down.

“So you even know how to write?”

“Eh, aren’t you looking down on me too much?”

“I am just proud of you.”

Not just our house but the servants for many others houses didn’t know how to write.

“Did you think I was just picked for this job?”

“So you were pretty smart when you were young?”

“Of course. I was the smartest.”

His talent for martial arts might have derived from here as well.

“But what are you writing?”

“I am writing a letter for Miss Do.”

“Miss Do? You mean Do Soon-ee?”

“What do you mean by Do Soon-ee? Just because you are the sect

master doesn't give you the right to say the name of someone else's girl."

"Someone else's girl? Is that someone you?"

"It will all depend on this letter. whether I really will be it or someone else will. Ah, I bought some gift but I don't know what to write."

Kwang Du was scratching his head.

"You also want to give a letter?"

"I don't feel comfortable saying it in front of her. So I want to express my feeling this way."

"What did you buy?"

"This."

The gift that he bought was a small string decoration for the hilt.

"When I saw her sword, she didn't have it. So, I bought a small one since it might get in her way. What do you think?"

"Cute."

“Really?”

I nodded. Once you become an expert you don't need decorations such as those because even though it may not disrupt your flow it has no added benefits. But since he bought a short one it won't get in the way. And they were not at the level where something like that would make a difference. Which made it a good gift to charm her.

“All I have to do now is write a letter. Do you have any advice for me?”

“Love understands love; there is no need for talk”

“Yes yes, really helpful. If you have nothing else to say, please don't bother me.”

Before I left I said something, “The most important thing about a love letter is...”

Although Kwang Du pretended to not listen, but I sensed that he was listening closely.

“Being truthful. Just express what your heart is saying.”

His ears became red. I got out of his room smiling. I was curious as to what will happen to his love on this summer day.

Now that I think about it, is this his first love?

Chapter 32: Into The Summer (3)

My mother held a banquet for the future generation in the region. She said it was a banquet for the youths who will lead San Dong in the future but her real motive was for an encounter between me and Song Hwa Rin. She must have been desperate, seeing that I haven't interacted with Song Hwa Rin after starting my own sword sect. So, before I left for another mission she planned this meeting.

Unfortunately, I really hated banquets. When I was still the Mengju I attended so many banquets that just hearing about one makes me sick. Not only you have to smile and interact with people that you hate. But since this was a banquet full of youths it was even worse. What more will a bunch of youths do other than get into fights after getting drunk from drinking wine?

Because my mother insisted that we hold a banquet I couldn't refuse. The invitation was sent out and the banquet was held. Song Hwa Rin, who received a special invitation, as well as other youths from San Dong's major families were all present.

I expected there to be a higher number of arrogant and haughty individuals because of our Clan's fall from grace, but the atmosphere was not bad. It was partly because of the good food and drinks that my mother had prepared with care but it was mainly because of the rumors about me. The part where I led my sword sect to eliminate the bandits was especially popular amongst them.

I could see the changes in their attitude towards me. No one

would ignore me but rather they would show respect to me and ask me how I eliminated that group of bandits with only the Lesser Sword Sect. Among them were some faces I recognized, they were the ones who were looking down on me that day with Yang Gi Kang. Whether it was out of self-interest or their true feelings, I already know.

It wasn't easy to raise an influential clan. You must smile at people you don't like and say things that you might not mean. And this was the reason why I was smiling and kindly listening to these youths brag and talk about their wealth, martial arts, and weapons. If I really didn't want to live a life like this then I didn't have to be entangled with them. But since I am here, I might as well look out for those who had a promising future. If I wanted to expand my influence they were the ones that I had to share a couple of drinks with. So, I made note of their growth, appearance and their family situation.

The conversation that I had with elder Jong had a huge influence in my dealings with the San Dong Merchant Guild. There might be a day when having small talks and relations like this might be the key to solving a problem. So me and Song Hwa Rin were on the listening end of the conversation.

She, just like me, took a step back in this banquet.

Her stares toward me were softer than before. It seems that the last incident really changed her. But she wasn't the type to start a conversation and she didn't have the opportunity to do so either. There were many male youths who flocked around her and there were others who were staring from a distance because they didn't

have the confidence to do so. This banquet might be enjoyable to some but it was detestable for others.

“Miss Song please have a drink with us.”

She had one response to all those requests, “I don’t drink.”

For some strange reason she really didn’t drink a drop of alcohol. Someone asked her why she didn’t drink but she just smiled in response.

Was there a reason she was like this?

But there was another thing that really made me curious. Why does she hate the Mengju. Because this wasn’t the proper time I had to hold onto my question and ask her later.

Because she was jealous of Song Hwa Rin being the center of attention, one of the other female youths who was invited asked her a question.

“Is it true that you canceled the engagement with young master Byuk?”

Because she said it pretty loud the area surrounding them became quiet. It seemed Song Hwa Rin was a bit upset. She had already said she didn’t want to share that story with everyone here.

So I stepped in and answered for her, “Even if you put aside the rumors, don’t you think that she might be too good for me?”

The male youths who were standing around us nodded their heads but the female said, “The outer appearance isn’t everything.”

It seemed that she really wanted to make Song Hwa Rin uncomfortable. It seemed that for most women, Song Hwa Rin could only make them jealous. But I didn’t plan on lowering myself or Song Hwa Rin to her level.

“She is also smart, and talented in martial arts. She is excellent in many areas.”

The female youth’s face hardened and she left with an ugly expression. She was expecting negative comments to come out since she brought up the topic of a canceled engagement, but it backfired and I only complimented Song Hwa Rin even more.

“Now let’s all cheer.”

I lifted my glass high.

After the banquet Song Hwa Rin approached me.

“Is that what you really think?”

“About what?”

“About me.”

I nodded since it was the truth.

“But the way you glance at me doesn’t say the same thing.”

“What about my glance?”

“It seems really blunt. It makes me wonder how you can even be that blunt.”

I smiled at her words. It may seem like that to her. But after opening my meridians my glances became deeper than before.

Then I moved the conversation in another direction.

“How is your practice going?”

“I am training hard.”

I don’t know who she trained under but I could feel it. She had decent skill, better than most of the youths that were here.

“What about you?”

“I am also training hard.”

Even if our conversation seemed short and choppy it was much smoother than before. Since I don't know what happened between these two when they were young I just had to build my relation back up and now it became smooth.

“I just want us to live casually.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“We are in our twenties now. And this is too good of a time to waste being bound by something. I just want us to enjoy our lives and live them fully.”

Her eyes shook. It seemed she could empathize with how I felt being bound.

“I don't know what you saw in my eyes but you are so beautiful that I might just fall for you.”

“That is what everyone says...”

She couldn't finish her sentence. There was regret in her eyes.

Yes, she was beautiful, maybe so beautiful that there were some things that she'd have to go through. She would have had to

endure through the stares of men and the jealousy of women. She might even have some scar that I don't know about.

“I know that you want to prove yourself worthy through your skills and not through your appearance. However, the more you try to show off your skill the more this world will judge you by your appearance.”

Her beauty was something that only one out of a million people have.

“Then how should I live?”

I could sense desperation in her question.

“Just accept that fact that you are beautiful and say something like this. Yeah, I am breathtakingly beautiful. So, what? Isn't it better to be beautiful than not? Something like that.”

“I... can't do that.”

Yes, I knew that she wasn't that type to do that. But this was something that she had to do to move on.

“I understand how you feel. But there are times when you have to completely accept something in order to move on.”

She was just blankly staring at me. She wasn't in a bad mood but

rather she had a thankful look since I understood how she felt.

“I really... don’t understand you.”

She probably wouldn’t. Ever since her return I was nothing more than a lowlife. My time was filled with gambling, chasing girls, being drunk and wasting money. On top of that I made a fit at her house drunk. But now that I was completely a different person, she probably was very confused.

I said with a smile, “Aren’t twenties the time when the most changes happen?”

My mother who was further away waved her hand at us. Song Hwa Rin respectfully bowed and I gave a big smile.

With that today’s banquet came to a close.

It seemed Kong Su Chan was so busy these days that it was pretty hard to catch a glimpse of his face. Even after the banquet ended and it was deep into the night he was still buried under mountain of paperwork.

Yes, this was one of the reasons why I needed a financial officer. Another was because I was very bad at dealing with money. I could calculate how to kill dozens of people in the shortest amount of time but I could never deal with money. To be honest I get confused trying to figure out how to feed the sword sect.

When I arrived at his office he respectfully got up his seat and greeted me, “Welcome sir?”

“I don’t know if I am being rude coming this late?”

“No it’s fine. As you can see I was still working. Ah, please have a seat here.”

Kong Su Chan offered me some cold tea from the pot, “It’s a tea that clears your mind.”

“So the reason why manager Kong is so smart is because you always drink this sort of thing.”

“Ha ha. You praise me too much.”

The person who I had to pay the most attention to was Kong Su Chan. Since he dealt with money he was one of the most crucial components in raising our Clan.

“How is it going these days?”

“It is going well for the most part.”

“How much money do we currently have?”

He didn't go around the bush and answered me immediately as if he had everything calculated in his head, "We have eighteen thousand Nyang."

He had made quite an investment. This showed how hard he worked.

"But most of it is tied with merchants as investments. Do you need money right away?"

"Not right now. But I plan on increasing the size of the sword sect around next spring."

"How many members are you adding?"

"Around forty people. Is it possible?"

"Next spring..."

After calculating something in his head, Kong Su Chan replied smiling, "It is possible."

"Good. Then please operate with that in mind."

"Yes, I understand."

With the addition of forty members we will be sixty strong. I plan

I dividing them into three groups with twenty members each. Having around sixty members would mean that we were a pretty sound sword sect. But seeing that Kong Su Chan didn't immediately answer when I said we were going to raise our numbers meant that there wasn't any room for relaxation in regard to the financial situation.

So in order for the sect to run more smoothly, I must take on more missions and make more money while raising our strength.

“If a mission comes please contact me right away.”

The next day when I went to find Kwang Du, I found him sitting and looking all dazed in the backyard which was his normal training spot. Although I had some clues I asked him ignorantly, “Why are you like this? Is training hard?”

Kwang Du Answered me with his head down and without any energy, “No, training is fun.”

“Then?”

“If you already know then why are you asking?”

“Did she say she doesn't like you?”

“...Yes.”

“She said it herself?”

She didn't seem like the type of person who would do something like that.

“No.”

“Then how do you know?”

“She didn't put on the string I gave her.”

“Ha ha ha.”

I finally couldn't hold back my laughter. I never thought it was something like this.

“How can you laugh at a situation like this?”

“And she didn't put it on because it was too precious?”

“What?”

Kwang Du's eyes became filled with light. It looked as if he found what he had lost.

“Ah, that could be it. I never thought of it like that. Stupid, stupid! I am really stupid. Thank you young master. Thank you very much.”

He quickly jumped up and grabbed my hand. Then I poured cold water over him who was getting fired up, “But you know it could just be that she didn’t put it on because she doesn’t like you.”

“Eh, don’t be like that. Why are you being so fickle.”

“It just means that we can never know what is in the heart of a woman.”

This was the area that I had the least confidence in even though I have over seventy years of experience.

“Well, you are right.”

Kwang Du sat back down with a sigh and I sat down next to him.

“What part about Do Soon-ee do you like?”

“Everything.”

“You didn’t like her to this degree?”

“It’s really weird. When she gave me the gift the other day, my

heart was racing. This sort of experience was the first. I also want to say it but this was the first time I got so anxious because of some gifts. I am being serious.”

“I didn’t say anything.”

I became a bit jealous of Kwang Du because I never experienced love that made my heart beat that way. Would my heart really beat like he said if I meet someone that I truly liked?

Then I changed the topic, “I think Song He likes you too.”

“She is still a child.”

I said it since he might not know it but it seemed he already knew. Of course, he wasn’t that ignorant.

“She is like a close sister to me.”

But the problem was Song He didn’t think like that.

It seemed that I, who was once the Strongest Under Heaven, as well Kwang Du, who just began his journey in martial arts, were having relationship problems. It was hard being in a relationship but it was also hard not being in a relationship.

“I am leaving. Just find your lost heart. Who knows if you might need to give it to someone else.”

“That’s mean.”

“Truth always hurts.”

Kwang Du stopped me as I was trying to leave.

“Wait, young master.”

He said with a serious face, “Teach me the art of throwing weapons as well.”

He didn’t want to lose out to Kwan He; it seemed he was still very competitive.

Chapter 33: Into The Summer (4)

I was able to receive our final mission for the summer through Kong Su Chan. It was a guard assignment from the Righteous Eastern Merchant Guild. They wanted us to protect them for a day while they were signing an important contract. They were willing to pay two thousand nyang for a single day of protection.

This was a pretty lofty sum for only a single day's worth of protection, signifying that they were being threatened somehow. Either way, they' said that the job would be dangerous, thus I'd decided to take that we'd do it.

Before we left, my father gave me some advice. "Don't be blinded by the your previous success. Accidents can happen at any time."

"Yes, father. I won't forget."

This was one of the things that I liked about my father; he was a righteous and straightforward person. On the contrary, my mother was an extremely carefree person.

"Son, go and make a lot of money!"

How could I not know her true feelings? She was simply hiding her true feelings by saying carefree things such as this.

"Yes, mother. I'll make sure to bring you back a gift."

“Bring back something expensive!”

I laughed. “I will.”

When the members of the Lesser Sword Sect and I reached the Righteous Eastern Merchant Guild, the atmosphere was extremely heavy. There were guard everywhere; even the servants were holding knives, clubs, and farming tools with the intention of protecting their master. However, when they saw us arrive, they loosened up a bit.

Once Baek Yeo, the man who'd hired, saw us, he rushed towards us and greeted us as if we were gods from heaven, “Welcome! Thank you for coming here on such a short notice.”

“Why is everyone acting like this?”

“Look at this.”

What he proceeded to show me was a threat letter. It was written such that, ‘If you don't stop this contract, you and your family will die’.

“Who sent you this?”

“A certain someone who's looking to stop our contract. They just want to get rid of me and take the contract for themselves.”

“You know, this could be an empty threat. Just to make you scared and step down.”

However, he shook his head.

“One of the relatives of the person who sent this is the guild leader of the Seo Jong Guild.”

“The Seo Jong Guild?”

“The Seo Jong Guild is a pretty famous dark guild. They’re a guild that follows their leader, Seo Ryang, and call themselves the Seo Jong Guild.”

Dark guilds aren’t part of the Murim Alliance nor the Demonic Alliance. They’re independent backwater groups that usually cause trouble wherever they are. They usually take over a region and tax the residents of that area, or become bandits and rob from merchants.

“Since we’re here, you don’t have any need to be afraid of them.”

“They shouldn’t be ignored simply because they’re a dark guild. They’re an evil group with many members. A lot of their members are proficient in martial arts too.”

“All right. Then, let’s prepare to set out.”

“...I’ll trust you.”

After leaving the room that Baek Yeo had led me to after seeing us, I called Kwan He immediately. “Our opponent might be someone from the Dark Guild. Thus, they might rush us at any time. Spread the word to the others that they need to prepare themselves.”

“Yes.”

The place that Baek Yeo needed to go to for his business contract was five-hours away from his house. We were only going to escort Baek Yeo since the guards of the Righteous Eastern Guild were staying behind in order to protect their headquarters.

Since we expected to have disturbances, and we knew who was going to impede us, I raised my guard and concentrated on my senses. If they decided to shoot arrows at us from far away when they attacked us, there might be some casualties.

I had plenty of experience doing this sort of thing, as I’d taken many missions when I was still the Mengju.

I’d heard of quite a few cases like this, but this was my first time both protecting someone and escorting them due to the threat of a dark guild.

Baek Yeo started a conversation with some members of the

Lesser Sword Sect while I was gone. “I heard that you guys took down a group of bandits.”

“Yes, we have.”

“Impressive. I’ve also heard that they were pretty famous.”

“That’s why we told you to not worry about a thing. The person sitting next to you was able to take out four bandits by himself.”

“Oh, is that so?”

The person sitting next to Baek Yeo was Kwang Du.

Kwang Du replied in a loud voice, “Don’t worry, we’ll protect you.”

“So, you’re keeping an expert by my side.”

Kwang Du flinched. That wasn’t why he was riding in the carriage. Even though Kwang Du had started practicing horse riding, he still wasn’t comfortable doing it. I’d told him to ride a carriage because of this.

Even though he only had a few days of practice, he’d tried to convince me to allow him to ride a horse. It was obvious that he wanted to impress Do Sun-ee with his horse riding skills since Do Soon-ee still hadn’t attached the decoration to her sword.

We were finally ambushed whilst crossing a flat plain. No one was surprised when the first thirty appeared, but more and more of them continued to show themselves in group of tens and twenties as they proceeded to surround us completely. By the time they'd all shown themselves, their numbers had reached three hundred.

We were completely surrounded by the members of the black guild who'd threatened Baek Yeo, who'd armed themselves with all sorts of weapon, be it spear, sword, or any blunt weapon they could find. This was honestly a pretty intimidating situation.

When Baek Yeo looked out the window of his carriage, he received quite a fright. "Oh my god. We're all doomed!"

"Don't worry." Kwang Du tried to calm him down, but the tremor in his voice just made Baek Yeo even more terrified.

Following Kwan He's order, the members of the lesser sword sect enveloped the carriage in a circular formation. Even though there were some of them that had plenty of real experience, when they saw the number of enemies in front of them, they couldn't help but be at least a little nervous.

There was no way that a single organization had this many members. More than likely, they'd asked for assistance from another organization.

However, Baek Yeo was a person who had a conscience. “I can just give up on this deal. There’s no need for you guys to take unnecessary casualties.”

Baek Yeo then yelled, “I’ll give up on the deal! Just let us go.”

Afterwards, someone who seemed to be their leader stepped out of the ocean of people that surrounded. Seeing that the other members of the dark guild had both made way and were respectful to this man, it seemed that he was Seo Ryang.

“Why did someone as reasonable as yourself make such a stubborn decision?”

“It was because of my ignorance. Please let us go.”

“This isn’t something that can be solved that easily.”

When the people around him saw him approach our vanguard, they quickly surrounded him.. The members of the lesser sword sect were all quite nervous because of how many of them there were. We absolutely couldn’t fight them head on, considering the fact that they outnumber us by a large margin. Not only that, but there were many of the enemies who had spears. If they rushed us and simply swung their spears, we wouldn’t be able to do anything—even if we were master martial artists.

They proceeded until they were ten steps in front of us, at which

point Seo Ryang said, “How can I trust you after what you’ve done? If I let you go back just like this, you might make plans to meet again tonight. All the people that you see are busy men; we can’t just gather them up for you again tonight.”

“No, I’ll give up on it for sure. I’ll even sign a contract for you.”

“What good will a piece of paper do?”

“Then what can I do?”

“Why don’t you give us one of your hands?”

“What?”

Baek Yeo turned pale, causing Seo Ryang to burst into laughter.

“I was just joking. You seemed rather scared.” Seo Ryang finally stopped laughing, then gave him a cold threat. “However, if we meet again, you’ll lose more than just your hand. Make way for that elder, he’s going back home.”

But he didn’t forget to insult us. “Simply being Murim-In and wearing sword at your waist doesn’t mean dog shit to this daddy. Disappear before this daddy changes his mind. This daddy has generously decided to let you live.”

The dark guild’s members all laughed and proceeded to open a

pathway for us.

Baek Yeo looked at me and said, “Let’s go back.”

Seeing that I hadn’t responded, he became desperate. “I said let’s go back. If they change their mind, we’re all dead. Let’s hurry!”

I finally decided to open my mouth. “If they’re that scary to you, then you should’ve just hired them instead.”

“What kind of tone is that?!”

“Since you’ve hired us, you should at least trust us a little bit.”

“What?”

I stared coldly at Seo Ryang and said, “Hey, you worthless piece of dog shit. Do you really think that we’ll leave just because you said to leave, or come just because you said to come?”

How could someone like me, who was once the Mengju, say these words you ask? Well, who were my opponents? If I think about all the curses that I’ve received from the Demonic Alliance ...it’s enough to make anyone vomit blood.

Seo Ryang proceeded to ask one of his men, “What’s that little punk saying?”

“I think that he wants to fight us.”

“Is there something wrong with his eyes?”

Everyone around him burst into laughter.

“However, if that’s his wish, then it’s our obligation to grant it.”

When Seo Ryang drew his weapon, everyone around him else readied their weapons. He trusted the three hundred men he was leading.

I quickly gave Kwan He an order. “Make a half circle using the carriage as a wall around Mister Baek and protect him.”

“Yes.”

“Look carefully at how I deal with these punks. I’ll show you the difference in class between a Murim-In and these pieces of trash.”

Shiiiiing.

I pulled out my sword and casually walked towards them. They got a bit nervous when they saw me approach them so casually.

What was the way to fight in this situation? Easy.

Step step step step.

I quickly rushed towards Seo Ryang. Just like in every other group fight, getting rid of the enemy leader is key.

The enemies rushed towards me in waves, but I cut them down easily.

Slash! Slash!

Several men quickly lost their heads. I quickly swung my sword and cut down the next wave of men. They were intimidated when they saw me easily cut down their comrades.

The ones with spears started swinging their spears around wildly. However, I was as fluid as water as I dodged their spears. My movement was repetitive, yet extremely elaborate.

Dodge, slash, block. Dodge, slash, block.

With every slash, another man fell. It only took an instant for more than ten corpses to appear. Everyone was shocked. All I'd done was dodge when needed and swing my sword when needed. It was much easier than dealing with a single person. Every time I swung my sword somebody had died; ten more bodies now laid on the ground.

Seo Ryang became flustered and quickly yelled, "Stop him! Kill that bastard!"

His flustered voice lowered his subordinates' morale.

He should've told his men to kill Byeok Yeo. If he'd done that, he would have diverted my attention. Either way, the result would've been the same considering the fact that Seo Ryung wasn't someone capable of something as complex as that. As of now, he'd most likely lost his reasoning.

They all charged at me, but the ones dying were them. It didn't matter how many of them there were, they were still just a rag tag group of bandits. Even if they had learned some form of martial arts, they still weren't better than the members of the Lesser Sword Sect. However, I didn't plan to kill all of them.

I stepped off of one of the corpses around me and leapt forward. I easily passed twenty men, and neared Seo Ryang, who was only about ten paces in front of me. When he saw how close I was to him, he screamed, "Stop him! Block him!"

There were only ten people between him and I. How could just ten men stop me if that many hadn't been able to previously?

Shiiing!

Splash!

Another five fell to my sword, causing the rest to turn tail and run away.

“Stop him! Stop that bastard!”

However, no one made a single step to help him. Their faces were frozen in fear.

I hadn't even lost my breath yet.

Seo Ryan stepped away from me in fear. “We'll withdraw. So...”

Ignoring what he was saying, I launched myself towards him. If I wanted to beat them, I couldn't let him live.

He drew his weapon and wildly swung it. It might have worked against one of his subordinates, but against me? Ha, don't even think about it.

Swish!

Slice!

When I landed behind him, Seo Ryang's movements stopped. A red line slowly appeared on his neck.

The next moment...

Thump!

The next moment his head fell off of his neck.

Splashhhh!

A fountain of blood proceeded to shoot out of his neck. Everyone was shocked stiff when they saw Seo Ryang's head hit the ground.

Whip!

I whipped my sword in the air and said, "Drop whatever's in your hands and get down on your knees."

Since my voice was infused with internal energy, it was loud and clear enough for everyone to hear it.

They all looked at each other for a few moments, not knowing what to do. Afterwards, the one closest to me threw down his weapon and dropped to his knees. "Please, spare me!"

This caused everyone else to throw down their weapons and drop down onto their knees.

"Please spare us!"

"Please spare us!"

There was no way three hundred rabbits could take down a tiger. Moreover, they were busy trying to keep themselves alive.

When I saw this, I yelled at the lesser sword sect, “Cut down anyone that opens their eyes and looks up!”

“Yes!”

The Lesser Sword Sect members replied in unison.

Hearing this, the members of the dark guild quickly closed their eyes and lowered their heads. Seeing three hundred people bowed down with their eyes closed was quite a sight.

As I approached my subordinates, I said, “This is what Murim-In is. In fact we’re called Murim-In because of things like this. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

The members of the Lesser Sword Sect’s had faces brimming with pride and a desire for strength.

Especially Kwang Du and Kwan He; they looked like they were dreaming.

This was what I wanted. I wanted them to be influenced by this. Even if you’re facing three-thousand enemies, you should never

show your back to them. I'm sure that, someday, they will display this sort of thing. That's something that I'm truly looking forward to.

Baek Yeo stared blankly at me with his mouth wide open. He was so stunned that he didn't know what to say.

I smiled and said, "Let's go. You still need to finish your contract."

Seo Ryong, as well as his two vice-leaders who were protecting Seo Ryong to the end, had all been slain by me; the Seo Jong Guild was no more.

Since the rest of them were just subordinates, I let them go after scaring them a bit. I threatened them by saying that, if I ever heard that they were up to no good again, then I'd come back to eliminate them. Even if they go back to their old ways, they'll at least stay hidden for a while.

The deal that day ended without a hitch, and Baek Yeo gave us the money he owed us.

"I added some extra just for you."

"You didn't have to."

However, since he most likely has a decent amount of money, I didn't decline. When I opened up the envelope he'd handed me, I

saw five one-thousand nyang notes. He'd added three thousand more to our original deal.

“Thank you. We'll be on our way now.”

“I'll call you again when I need you.”

“Please do.”

But by that time, you won't be able to hire us with this much money. Our value will have increase by tenfold.

Chapter 34: Where Is This Wind Blowing From(1)

After coming back from our mission, the morale of the Lesser Sword Sect soared through the heavens. But the news of us defeating the dark guild didn't create an outcry compared to when we defeated the group of bandits. The word on the street was that we were able to suppress Seo Jong Dark guild, not defeat it.

But it wasn't too bad since during times like this the internal atmosphere of our group was more important than our reputation. The bond between the members became even stronger.

There are many factors that impact the strength of a group and the sense of belonging but the most important role fell on the shoulder of the leader. If the leader shows his intelligence and demonstrate his strength by leading his subordinates from the front, then his position is reaffirmed and the organization will grow stronger. It is only natural that people follow someone who is worthy.

Kwan He told me that whenever the members of the Lesser Sword Sect meet they always say that they want to become like me and that more are joining him for the morning training. It seemed that through this mission, I became their role model.

Eight more members came to learn the throwing techniques from me. Adding the members who were already learning them, it added up to almost every member. So, I taught them without hesitation. If there are early birds, then there are bound to be late bloomers.

Although there were some who didn't come to learn, I had no hard feelings for them. Maybe there was a reason for it. Whether they want to learn it or not, I was going to have an open heart for all of them.

Kwang Du truly worked hard. With regards to throwing techniques alone, even though he started to learn later than Kwan He he had become better at it. It wasn't only effort since Kwan He didn't put any less effort than Kwang Du, but rather natural talent.

Only a couple of days had passed since I taught him but when Kwang Du threw three daggers from twenty paces away he was able to hit a single target with great precision. At this rate in about a month, he might even hit all three with great precision.

But not everything went smoothly.

Finally, there was a complication. Someone from our lesser sect got into a fight with someone from the main branch.

When I arrived at the scene, the fight had already ended. It seemed that one who was at the losing end was our side. Because members from both sides arrived it didn't escalate too much and they were currently only exchanging words.

“Is is alright just because you are the Sunbae?”

“This punk?”

“If you consider it carefully then you are not even our sunbae.”

The name of the person who was getting pretty heated right now was Yang Gu. Since he was originally a sentinel, he was pretty old and his personality wasn't like others'. But once I arrived Yang Gu calmed down and bowed his head.

“First he is your sunbae. He is from the main sect while we belong to the Lesser Sword sect. Understood?”

Yang Gu replied yes in a weak voice.

After hearing his reply the expression of the people from the main sect loosened a bit. Since it can become an issue later it was better to sort out things like this.

“Why did you get into a fight?”

Yang Gu didn't reply.

“Do I have to ask you twice?”

“No! it was my fault.”

“I am not asking whose fault it was. I am asking why you get into a fight.”

“That is... I was looking somewhere else and bumped into him.”

“So you weren’t looking at where you were going?”

“Yes.”

“Then why did you get into a fight?”

“I wanted to apologize but he cursed at me first.”

Then I asked the man from the main sect, “Did you really?”

“It just came out as a reflex. It wasn’t too bad of a curse.”

I looked back at Yang Gu, “Then?”

Yang Gu took deep breath and said, “When I saw his face... he reminded me of the man who killed my comrade.”

Then everyone around him had a look of pity. But the one who fought with Yang Gu made a dumbfounded expression, “Isn’t he crazy?”

When I looked at Yang Gu who had his head down I could sense what kind of pain he was going through. It was a pain that only those who experienced losing a comrade knew. This was the pain

of losing a comrade before one's very own eyes.

Then I looked back at the man who fought with Yang Gu and asked, "So, what should I do? Do you want to fight more with this crazy person? Or should I just ask him to apologize?"

"No, it's alright."

He turned around. Even though he said he was crazy he didn't say anything to Yang Gu since Yang Gu said he lost his comrade.

Then everyone dispersed and only me and Yang Gu were left.

"What kind of friend was he?"

"He was my comrade when I was still a sentinel."

"That's how it is."

"This friend..."

After taking big breath he painfully finished his sentence, "... died because of me. Because I was so tired that day I didn't get up... He was pulling guard by himself because he was considerate of me..."

Yang Gu couldn't finish his sentence. He lowered his head,

clenched his and shook his shoulder. He was forcefully suppressing his tears.

I looked into the sky. It was so clear that there was not a cloud in the sky. It made me wonder if it was all right?

Yang Gu finally said it in a small voice, "... I killed him."

I looked back down at him and said, "You could have."

Yang Gu was trembling even further.

I calmly said to him, "You and I and other people could all think like that. But there's only one person... your friend, who would definitely think otherwise."

I saw a tear drop on the ground but pretended not to have seen it. It was inconsiderate pointing out the fact that a grown man that was crying.

"Since you made a mistake shouldn't you be punished?"

"Yes! I will receive my punishment."

"Run fifty times around the track without using your ki."

"Yes!"

Yang Gu headed toward the track.

I understood how he felt but I also punished him for his own good. Everyone else will overlook this incident without thinking much about it if they learn that he had received the proper punishment, as they aren't ignorant people.

I silently looked at Yang Gu running around the track. What would he be thinking about? He is probably running around thinking about his friend. I knew what he was feeling more than anyone else. Through my years of battle I lost too many people. I experienced many different emotions through the years. I felt the resentment, regret, and doubt caused by losing people.

One day I hope that Yang Gu will visit me for a drink. I wanted to help shoulder his burden a bit.

Kong Su Chan approached me with a big smile.

“Our investment was a great success. I was expecting a profit of two thousand nyang but the actual profit was four thousand five hundred. Adding the rewards that you received, by next year we can add not just forty but eighty members.”

“Oh, this is great news.”

I was truly happy. But regardless I wasn't going to take his suggestion.

“I plan to take only forty more members as planned.”

Hearing my words Kong Su Chan made a smile.

“Why are you laughing?”

“It is a good thing that you are not too greedy. I rushed here to tell you the good news but it seems that I wanted you to not be greedy.”

That was what I was going to say. I wanted to tell him not to make rash investments but instead increase our funds slowly.

There is a saying that says old horses ask for more carrots. It just means the older you get the greedier you become.

When I was still the Mengju I saw many cases such as this. Most of the old people from the council of elders acted like this. They were greedy about the impossible.

Since I was near their age I distanced myself from those old fools and I looked at them as an example.

The desire for improvement was different than greed. I wasn't greedy but wanted to make improvements.

I cautioned Kong Su Chan against making any rash investment.

Always take the safest route.

“You can go slowly. Taking a single step at a time. The most important thing is making progress, however small?.”

Kong Su Chan respectfully bowed and said, “I will remember your words.”

The relationship between him and me was getting better by the day.

On the last days of August, the members of the sword sect were training. I was sitting on the side looking at them train.

It had only been five months since it was formed. Through my effort and oversight, it was able to find its place. If someone who didn't know us looked at us, they would think that it was created couple of years ago. Not only that we also had the skills and experience of a group that was formed couple of years ago.

We took on three more mission after the two mission that we had against the bandits and the dark guild. I just followed them once and let them go by themselves the other two times. Even though there were some injuries they were able to come back safely. And of course, they made money. With the three missions, they were able to earn four thousand five hundred nyang which wasn't a small amount. But the money was secondary, the most important thing was that they were able to get more experience through this.

Through these experiences, they strengthened their bonds and felt the need to seek improvements. They need to seek to improve themselves because that was the rule of Kang Ho. Where the weak are killed by the strong.

Also, their respect towards me grew by the day.

But they weren't the only ones who were making improvements. I also made great improvements myself.

Through these five months I was able to accumulate four years' worth of energy. Now I had twenty-four years' worth of energy. But my goal was sixty years. At this rate, I will be able to reach my goal in four years. If I become lucky I will be able to acquire a cultivating elixir and shorten that time further.

Not only did my cultivation improve but my physical capabilities also improved vastly from before. I was able to execute the basic and the advanced stances of my family's Brightmoon Sword Art as well as execute the first three stances of my personal sword art, the Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art, with ease.

Even though I made vast improvements I sometimes feel off. When I went to a restaurant, there wasn't any talk about my death. This was expected but I was feeling a bit depressed.

Alright, I see how it is. So you are all going to forget me just like that? Even if this was something that I could understand there was something that I couldn't understand. How could these people be so ignorant of their situation, now that Ma Bong Gi became the

new Mengju? This was the difference in perspective between me who was the former Mengju and these common people.

I decided to live my life differently.

Chun Ha Jin is now dead. I am now Byuk Lee Dan.

In my final years I felt as if I lived in a cage. But now I am free. So I am going to live differently.

With the cool breeze, the summer came to an end.

It is said that signs of a typhoons come in unexpected ways.

The clan master Jung Yeo secretly came over to meet me.

“This time someone from the Heavenly Dao Gate came over.”

“Someone from Heavenly Dao Gate?”

“He is called Ma Jung Soo and he is one of Ma Bong Gi’s sons.”

Since Ma Bong Gi had so many sons I didn’t know who he was. But there was one thing that I knew, which was that there was going to be internal strife for the successor’s seat. Since becoming the successor would not only mean succeeding the Clan but also succeeding the Murim Alliance, so this struggle is going to be more

brutal than ever.

“I think Ma Jung Su plans on asking all the heads of the Murim Clans in this city to meet at the Province Lord’s place.”

“The reason?”

“He didn’t specify his reason but...”

Although Jung Yeo didn’t finish his words I nodded.

“Whatever his motive is, it can’t be good.”

If it was done with a good intention then there was no way they would be so vague. So Ma Bong Gi has already started to expand his sphere of influence throughout all of Kang Ho.

“But the Province Lord already refused their request.”

“He refused them?”

“Yes.”

“What kind of person is the Province Lord?”

“From what I heard he is someone who is upright.”

Yes, why would there only be Murim-in like Kong Jong who are corrupt to the root? There were bound to be upright people amongst them.

“After that Ma Jung Soo visited us. They were threatening us in order to hold a banquet. I rushed here after telling them that I will contact them soon. So what should I do?”

After some thought I told him, “Say that you will host the banquet.”

Because if it wasn't held here then the next place that they would go to was the Song Clan. It was going to be a problem if I refused, but it was also going to be a problem if I accepted. So it was better to agree to their terms at a place where I had some influence through the Yang Clan.

“I understand.”

“You have completely taken over the Yang Clan, right?”

“Yes, you don't have to worry.”

“Then you don't have to personally come here. Send someone that you trust most. Since that person has your trust I will also trust that person.”

I knew that some minor words such as this will make a big difference in another person's heart. In other words, I am testing his loyalty while strengthening it.

“If you have anything else you need please contact me.”

“Alright.”

When I first made Jung Yeo the clan head of the Yang Clan I never had any plans of controlling him directly. However, now that I think about it, the importance of the Yang Clan was getting bigger. In events like this they were a great help.

After sending him back I was deep in thoughts.

‘Is this the precursor to a typhoon?’

‘Or is it just a wind passing by?’

I will know soon enough.

Chapter 35: Where Is This Wind Blowing From (2)

The next day, the Yang Clan sent out invitations to several of the clans within the city. The top twenty families within San Dong City received one. Even though there wasn't any real standard to determine each family's ranking, there was still bound to be a ranking considering the fact that Kang Ho was a place ruled by those with strength. This was true not just for San Dong, but for other areas as well.

Our family received an invitation as well. Even though our family had fallen in power, we were still within the top twenty.

The invitation was for a meeting that would be held at the Yang Clan in three days time.

The invitation also asked for those invited to please attend the meeting, as an important guest from the Heavenly Dao Gate would be making an appearance. Since Ma Bong GI had become the new Mengju, this invitation could be interpreted as a mandatory invitation.

My father shook his head with a questionable expression. "Why would they invite us?"

My father was suspicious of both the Yang Clan and the Heavenly Dao Gates, hence why he felt like something was wrong, and that something was about to happen.

“The person from the Heavenly Dao Gate is most likely just someone minor.”

My father nodded at my mother’s reply.

“I think so too. There’s no way that an inner member of the Heavenly Dao Gate would make their way all the way to San Dong City, considering how busy they are with the Central Plain.”

“We’ll know once we get to the meeting.”

Whilst they were discussing their conversation, I said something, “Can I come with you, father?”

“You want to come?”

“I need to start learning about these sort of things, right?”

Even though he tried not to show it, his face was full of joy. “All right, let’s go together then.”

My mother approached me with a content expression and hugged me. “Son, I’m proud of you.”

Although I’m sometimes surprised by these actions, I’m honestly happy when they happen. My mother’s arms’ are always warm.

Three days later, my father and I arrived at the Yang Clan's manor. It wasn't only the two of us that were present; the heads of the other major clans from San Dong City were also already present.

The Yang Clan's master, Jung Yeo, stood at the entrance, greeting everyone that had been invited to the meeting.

Jung Yeo respectfully greeted my father, "It's an honor to meet the great lord of the Byuk Clan."

My father also showed him some respect. "Congratulation on becoming the new Gaju of the Yang Clan; your name is already spreading throughout San Dong City."

Even though several clans had already sent congratulatory letters to Jung Yeo, this was the first time that someone was congratulating him in person.

"You flatter me too much. I'm extremely honored to be complemented by you. Thank you very much."

Due to Jung Yeo's respectful behavior, my father became a little flustered. Even though there had been a bit of an incident due to the death of its previous Gaju, the Yang Clan still reigned as the number one clan within San Dong City. The reason that Jung Yeo was behaving as such was, of course, because of me. Since I was

behind my father, how could he act rashly?

Jung Yeo glanced at me and said, “I’ve heard all about your achievements, Young Master Byuk.”

“I was able to achieve some results due to luck.”

“How can the matters of Kang Ho be determined by luck? There’s no need to humble yourself that much.”

“Thank you very much.”

Jung Yeo proceeded to say to my father, “You have a great son.”

My father smiled. Since there were other guests behind him he was even more proud. How could he not be proud, considering the fact that he was being complimented about his son in front of all these people?

My father and I entered the main hall.

There were other guests that had arrived inside already. My father introduced me to each of them, one by one. This was my chance to learn what the top twenty clans within San Dong City’s leaders looked like. I utilized my memory to its full extent, ensuring that I didn’t miss a single thing my father said. I remembered all of their names, personalities, and faces.

The head of the Song Clan, Song Wu Kyung, arrived a bit late.

“If I knew that you were going to come, I would’ve brought Hwa Rin-ee.” He seemed to feel a bit regretful about not doing so, but just smiled at me.

Eventually, everyone who’d received an invitation had arrived. Everyone was currently discussing amongst themselves what this meeting could be, but no one really knew what it was about.

Half an hour later, the front doors opened, and Jung Yeo entered with four people following him.

A male youth who appeared to be in his mid-twenties took the lead, his steps full of confidence and pride. From the way he was dressed, I assumed that he was Ma Jung Soo. I was surprised; he was younger than I’d expected him to be.

‘How much longer will that old buffoon continue to spread his seed?’

Of the three guards behind him, I knew two of them.

The old man with white hair was Old Man Flower Fan. His weapon of choice was a vividly decorated fan full of poison. At one point, he’d tried to become a doctor at the Murim Alliance hospital, but hadn’t been able to. The reason that I hadn’t allowed it was mainly due to his personality. Even though he was extremely skilled at his work, he had a questionable personality.

He was someone that was both extremely familiar with politics as well as greedy for power. As such, I couldn't allow him to join.

However, just because his weapon was a fan didn't mean that I could lower my guard against him. There were many people that had died at his hand because they'd lowered their guard. Even though I have twenty-four years of energy built up, I can't lower my guard. These old freaks always have several hidden trump cards. It wasn't strange for him to be working with the Heavenly Dao Gate either, considering the fact that he was greedy for power.

The middle-aged man next to him was an expert directly from the Heavenly Dao Gate.

His name was Si Gon. He was the one of the two representatives that the Heavenly Dao Gate had sent out during the Alliance's Heavenly Warrior Competition.

I remember him for his impressive sword arts. Considering that that was some eight-odd years ago, his skills must have improved even more. In my opinion, despite his young age, he's more of an expert than Old Man Flower Fan.

The last one was a beauty whose age was uncertain. If I look at her one way, she looks young, but if I look at her another way, she looks old. Despite this, one thing was certain: She's a hidden expert of Kang Ho. She didn't have a sword hanging from her waist, which means that she must use some sort of hidden weapon or her bare hands. She was truly a mystery.

However Ma Jung Soo wasn't lacking, in any way, compared to his guards. The atmosphere that surrounded him was completely different from the other youths of San Dong City, easily showing the difference in their status.

Despite everything, he'd given me a very bad first impression. First off, I didn't like his stare. Even though he was the same age as Kwang Du, his stare was akin to that of a middle-aged man's; it wasn't clear, and I sensed blood-lust from it.

Everyone became nervous when they arrived. They hadn't known how to act when they heard that guests from the Heavenly Dao Gate would be appearing. Even though they were the leaders of their respective clans, if they were to get into a fight with Old Man Flower Fan or Si Gon, there wasn't anyone present that could win. Since they were already losing in terms of pressure, they had no choice but to be nervous.

Jung Yeo introduced Ma Jung Soo with a brief speech.

Ma Jung Soo went to the center of the room. "It's an honor to meet all of you, the heroes of San Dong. I must thank the master of the Yang Clan for gathering everyone here. "

Ma Jung Soo was full of confidence and self-arrogance despite being in front of twenty clan leaders.

"The reason that I've gathered you all here today was because of one reason."

After grabbing everyone's attention, he opened his mouth to continue. However, he said something that no one expected, "I want to start a small martial arts school within this city."

Everyone was surprised by what he said, and the atmosphere inside the room immediately became heavy.

Everyone was currently having a similar thought: Would the martial arts school that he opened really be a small one? It didn't matter whether or not the Mengju had that many children, he was still the descendent of the Mengju. Why would a direct descendant of the Mengju come all the way here just to open a martial arts school? There must be some other motive behind this decision.

He could be using a martial arts school as an excuse to set up a branch clan, the San Dong Branch of the Heavenly Dao Gate. Since the other Clans might be against such creation, they were using the excuse of setting up a martial arts school to expand their power here. Or maybe there was some other meaning.

"I would like everyone's cooperation in this matter."

The mood grew even worse. By saying this, he was practically telling them that he was going to rip them off.

At that moment, the Clear Tree Clan's leader, Kwak Taek, stood up with a chuckle. "Of course we'll help you."

The leader of the Nine Dragons Clan, Suk Do Moon, tried to ease

the atmosphere along with his chuckle. “Since Lord Ma has come all the way to San Dong, it would be our honor.”

“Yes, we welcome your arrival to San Dong.” Kwak Taek and Suk Do Moon casually exchanged greetings.

However, I already knew that, before this meeting, Ma Jung Su had already met with them, and that this is what they’d promised to say. Aside from these two, the atmosphere surrounding everyone else had turned pretty grim.

Ma Jung Soo looked around, then placed his sights on us.

Both my father and Song Wu Kyung had hardened faces like the other leaders.

“Aren’t you Lord Byuk of the Byuk Clan?”

Ma Jung Soo decided to pick on my father. My father was also a bit shocked that Ma Jung Soo had been able to determine who he was after just a quick glance.

“Yes. I’m the current head of the Byuk Clan.”

“Your expression doesn’t look too good. Is there something that’s bothering you?”

It was hard for my father to answer a question like this. “It seems

that my stomach is somewhat upset.”

“Oh, so that’s what it was.”

Ma Jung Soo left the center of the room and approached us. He was giving off a apprehensive vibe. When he reached us, he took out something in front of my father. It was a small medicine bottle no bigger than the my thumb.

“If you drink this, you’ll be alright.”

My father became even more nervous.

No, to be honest, I was more nervous than he was. How could he drink something like this without even knowing what it was?

However, my father wasn’t in a situation where he could refuse. There wasn’t anything that my father could do. I could clearly see the evil intent hidden within Ma Jung Soo’s sly smile. Most other people wouldn’t be able to see it, but I was someone who had plenty of experience dealing with evil people. As such, his evil intent couldn’t escape my sight. His smile was full of coldness.

Ma Jung Soo suddenly said in a surprised tone, “Oh my! I almost made a mistake! I took out the wrong bottle. This one has poison. I didn’t bring the antidote for it either. Good thing you didn’t drink it, you almost caused yourself extreme pain.”

Both atmosphere and my father’s expression became denser.

Ma Jung Soo casually continued, “Just as the leader of the Byuk Clan, which was once was the strongest clan in San Dong, should be. To survive in Kang Ho for a long time you always need to be careful. I’ve learned this lesson from you today.”

He said it in such an ambiguous tone that it was hard to differentiate between whether it was actually a threat or a mistake. However, this was clearly a threat. He’d poison them if they acted against him. However, this wasn’t the end of his threat.

He proceeded to turn his gaze towards me. “This must be your son, right? He looks pretty handsome. Hahaha.”

My father’s face grew even darker. This was clearly him threatening to kill his family if he didn’t comply.

Song Wu Kyung, who was sitting next to us, quickly asked, “Where do you plan on building this school?”

If my father couldn’t hold back his anger and acted against Ma Jung Soo, the ones who were at a disadvantage were our side.

“I apologize. I won’t make such a mistake in the future.” After glancing at my father and giving him a bow, he returned back to the center of the room.

“I plan on setting up this martial arts school in Jae Nam. I also plan on slowly expanding it after it gets started...” He proceeded to

talk about his martial arts school.

Song Wu Kyung grabbed my father's hand underneath the table we were sitting at. It was his way of saying good job on holding it in. My father immediately emptied his glass. I knew that he'd threatened my father just so that he could threaten everyone else in this room. It was both a very dirty and a shameful method. Whatever happened, the result would've been the same. However, he used my father because he wanted to turn the atmosphere to his favor.

Even though my expression was blank, my heart was now as cold as ice. This punk had dared to threaten my father? And to even do so in front of me?

Chapter 36: Where Is This Wind Blowing From? (3)

The donated amount was determined. From the clan rankings, the top three clans must donate five thousand nyang, the fourth to the tenth clans must donate three thousand nyang, and from the rest, from the eleventh to the twentieth, must donate a thousand nyang.

Clear Tree Clan Master Kwak Taek and Nine Dragon Master Suk Do Moon were the ones who spearheaded this. It may have looked like they discussed the amount for the donation with the different clans, but just by looking at how things were done I knew that this was predetermined by Ma Jung Soo.

This was no small amount. By collecting all the donations, it would add up to tens of thousands of nyang. But the bigger problem was he would not stop with this one donation.

Since he did not personally demand money he could not be accused of coercion. He just asked for some help as he introduced himself. But of course, the different clans were dissatisfied. This was no small amount of money but the real reason they were dissatisfied was because this hurt their pride. They wondered how Ma Jung Soo could disrespect them like that. But they weren't in the position to refuse since the first person who refused would be made an example. If they were not planning of fighting against the Heavenly Dao Gate then they could only obey.

This was something that I, as the previous Mengju, could never imagine.

No one knew how to react to this situation.

Song Wu Kyung said in frustration, “When it rains it pours. I guess we could only sigh as this storm passes.”

My father had no response

It was late in the night, since atmosphere in the room was too congested I went out for a walk.

The Byuk Clan’s garden was well decorated. Whether it was the trees or the flowers they were growing well since the person who was in charge of this garden was Elder Jong. Although he seemed mean and rough, he unexpectedly had this side to him.

As I was walked through the garden, there was already someone here. It was my father.

“Father?”

“It is late in the night, why are you still up?”

“I can’t sleep. How come you are not sleeping father?”

“I can’t seem to fall asleep as well.”

He seemed very upset. It must be because of the events that happened today since he was humiliated in front of his son. What parent wants to look weak in front of their children?

He would be upset. Since this was the hardest moment in my father's life. On top of that he said something that wasn't like him, "We decided to give them the donation."

There was a slight tremor in his voice but I knew why he made such a decision. It wasn't that he was afraid of the threat Ma Jung Soo made against him but because Ma Jung Soo made a threat against me. He was afraid that repercussions would befall me if he did not pay the donation.

I smiled and said to my father, "You did the right thing."

He asked me, "Is that what you really think?"

"Yes, believe it was the right decision. Doesn't it say in the art of war 'if the enemy is too strong retreat for a bit.' But your will and thoughts aren't defeated. Just consider this as a small retreat for the bigger picture."

I didn't say these words just to comfort him. This came from heart since this also applied to me.

"Thank you for thinking that way."

Since I respected my father... I could forgive that scum even less.

‘Father, please hold it in for a bit longer. I will definitely exact revenge on that punk.’

‘Yes, I admit, this was the first time in my life that I made such decision based on my feeling towards my father.’

That night I really wanted to put on a disguise and take his head. But I knew I couldn’t do that. That was going to be my last option. To be realistic he had Si Gong as well as Old Man Flower Fan guarding him. They were skilled experts whose skills couldn’t be treated lightly. Not only that there was also that mysterious female expert behind him. And if I did manage to get to him Ma Jung Soo wasn’t an easy target either.

I only had a chance of success if I surprised him. The problem was making that situation happen. But even then I couldn’t guarantee I would succeed.

Even if I succeeded in killing Ma Jung Soo, experts from the Heavenly Dao gate would come in flocks to find out what happened. And that wasn’t something I wanted. I didn’t want San Dong to be the center of attention just yet. I need more time to raise my strength.

“Father, how about a drink?”

I drank late into the night with my father. My father who usually

doesn't get drunk got drunk tonight, I also drank until I was drunk.

The money from the various clans were collected through the Clear Tree Clan and into Ma Jung Soo's hands. And Ma Jung Soo sent gifts as appreciation for the donation. But the prices of the gifts were not low. They were worth about half the donations that he received. This made the others less doubtful of him. There were some who were discussing whether he was really here to gather money. But of course, the one who spread that rumor were the Clear Tree Clan and the Nine Dragon Clan.

This sort of rumor was also going around. Since there was no way of stop Ma Jung Soo from building his school and increasing his forces it was better to befriend him. Whether it was good or bad, everyone was being wary of Ma Jung Soo.

He was truly intelligent. He knew how to use his strength and he also knew how to handle his men. But the ideas wouldn't have come from just him. He had Old Man Flower Fan by his side.

I decided digging into Ma Jung Soo was the most important thing right now. So, I received five thousand nyang from Kong Su Chan. I predicted I would need to buy some information. He didn't ask what it was for but gave me the money he had saved. Adding in what I could gather, I had a total of six thousand nyang. I was going to use this money very sparingly.

But the good thing was he was staying at the Yang Clan, which

was practically my backyard. First I bought a high-grade face alteration mask with a thousand nyang. The reason why I bought this was because I couldn't go into the Yang Clan with the face of Byuk Lee Dan so I bought this since I thought I might need to use it more than once.

After applying my face alteration mask I headed towards the Yang Clan. I was able to meet Jang Yeo secretly since I messaged him earlier.

“I brought you here since he is staying in the guest pavilion. I am sorry.”

“No, it's alright.”

It was a better place than the guest pavilion. This room was a small room that was attached to Jung Yeo's room. Originally this room was where the guards rested but it seemed that he sent them away for a few days. By showing me to this room which was attached to his, he was showing his loyalty to me.

It was clean with a new table and tea cups. Even the bed and the blankets were all new. For me, he must have done his best.

“What is Ma Jung Soo doing right now?”

“He is meeting people. He is meeting the people that were at the gathering one by one. Seeing that he requested to deliver wine to his table tonight, it seems that someone is coming over.”

“So he is dividing and conquering.”

“That’s what it seems.”

This was a smart method. Scare them in their first meeting then invite them over one by one to calm them down. This showed that he was different than those who just intimidated people for money without much thought. He was actually pretty smart. He was someone who prepared.

“What about you?”

“What do you mean?”

“Since he is staying at this place doesn’t that mean he has some trust in you?”

“I think he is just pretending. I think I am just his puppet. He is implicitly threatening me to not have any irregular thoughts since he is at my house.”

He wanted me to truly believe him.

“If it wasn’t for you I was going to leave this place and be lost in Kang Ho somewhere. I would be living my life without second thoughts. And I would die a miserable death that no one would know about. I am not someone who doesn’t recognize the grace

that they received.”

“I’m grateful you see it that way.”

“It isn’t much.”

“Please be careful of him.”

“Don’t worry, this is my personal room.”

“Then I will take my leave.”

As I was about to leave he said, “Ah, one more thing. There is an information merchant who I use a lot. I already asked him to gather information regarding Ma Jung Soo. You can use him whenever you need to know something about Ma Jung Soo. And you are going to need this.”

He told me about the location of the information merchant and gave me a little talisman. I was really thankful for him since I was able to gather information regarding Ma Jung Soo without spending my money.

“You have my thanks. I will share the information I get with you.”

“I would be thankful if you did so. But first I will tell my subordinates that this face-alteration mask is my guest. Just show

this talisman and you will be able to enter without any problems and you can use this room however you wish.”

“Many thanks.”

Since I was considerate of him he was taking care of me. If you look at it from bigger picture it wasn't a bad investment. Since I was someone who repaid grace with grace.

Half an hour later I arrived at the information merchant that Jung Yeo told me about. I still had my face-mask on.

He told me about the information that he was able to gather, “Ma Jung Soo is one of Ma Bong Gi's twenty two sons.”

Twenty two? This old fool really has a lot of spawns.

“He is one of the six who are competing for the seat of the heir. However, it is told that Ma Jung So is the least likely to succeed. Even though he isn't likely succeed he is very intelligent and skilled. And his martial art skills aren't lacking compared to the other successors.”

“But why is he unlikely to succeed?”

“Because his mother was a concubine.”

“So he doesn’t have the backing.”

“Yes. He is someone who raised his own strength.”

In other words he was someone who held deep resentment within his heart.

“Unluckily his mother died in an accident that happened around ten years ago when the house caught on fire. Since he doesn’t have any other relative Ma Bong Gi is the only one that shares his blood.”

“Do you know the reason why he came down here?”

“He says that he wants to create a martial arts school here but that doesn’t seem like his real objective. Most likely he came here to increase his strength.”

Finally, I asked the most important question. The question that I truly wanted to know.

“Is this Ma Jung Soo’s will or is it Ma Bong GI’s will?”

The information merchant was hesitant at my question. Then he said, “I wasn’t able to dig that deep.”

I could tell that he was very hesitant since it was something that

was dealt with the Mengju. So he was going to approach this very cautiously.

Since he had only been appointed no one knew how Ma Bong Gi was going to run Kang Ho. So these merchants were very hesitant in telling these things.

“Lastly who are the experts that are following him?”

He told me about Old Man Flower Fan and Si Gon. But he could not tell me about the female.

“I have no information regarding her.”

‘In other words, she is someone who is so mysterious that she didn’t get caught within the information net. This must mean she is someone who isn’t part of the Heavenly Dao Gate since there wasn’t anyone important from the Heavenly Dao Gate that I didn’t know about. And she wasn’t someone important from the Murim Alliance since I knew the ins and out of it. Where was this woman from? ‘

“This is all that I know. I will contact you if I find anything else.”

“Alright. Thank you for your work.”

After getting out of the Information merchant I put on my straw hat and slowly walked back. Yes, there was no need for me to rush things. I will slowly cut off his resources one by one and find his

weakness. I had the advantage, since he was in the light while I was in the dark.

The money that he made from all the Clans was in the tens of thousands. Within that stack there was bound to be the money that he brought. If he planned on taking over this area then he would require a considerable amount of money. Since he would not be able to gather that much money from the Clans he must have brought some money of his own.

Thinking about it made my mouth water.

Doesn't the meat taste more delicious the more fat and meat it has?

I will suck you dry to the bone.

Chapter 37: The Method Of Avoiding The Wind (1)

As the Western Saber Clan's leader, Hwang Chung, made his way to the guest pavilion he was more nervous than ever. Because the person he was going to meet here at the Yang Clan's household was Ma Jung Soo. Ma Jung Soo had secretly sent someone to set up this meeting.

The Western Saber Clan was ranked sixth in San Dong City so naturally he attended the previous meeting. He was one of the Leaders who had a bad premonition about Ma Jung Soo.

He thought of Ma Jung Soo as an 'Insolent pup' who only has the guts to threaten others because the backing from his father. But he knew that he could never express his true feelings because the Heavenly Dao Gate was an organization that he didn't dare to make an enemy of and now they are in control of the Murim Alliance.

Guided by one of the maids, he found his way into the guest room. Ma Jung Soo was drinking by himself as he was waiting for him. As Hwang Chung made his way, Ma Jung Soo stood up and greeted him, "Oh! Welcome Hwang Bangju-nim."

"Lord Ma. It is my honor being here."

Although Ma Jung Soo was too young and had not made a name for himself, Hwang Chung had no other choice than to address him as a lord.

Hearing Hwang Chung's response, Ma Jung Soo quickly said, "What do you mean Lord Ma? It is too much. Just treat me as your brother."

"Ha Ha. I don't think I am worthy to call you that."

"No no. I wasn't even born when you took down the Scarlet Demon. You are more than worthy to call me brother."

Hearing that, Hwang Chung was surprised.

"How do you know that I killed the Scarlet Demon?"

Thirty years ago, when Hwang Chung was still in his prime, an Evil Practitioner with Scarlet Hair made a great disturbance in the city of San Dong. Since he was overflowing with youthful vigor he was brave enough to exchange blow with the Scarlet Demon and brought him down. And Ma Jung Soo was well-informed about this story.

"After hearing it from my uncle I grew to respect you."

"Your uncle is?"

"He is called the Crimson Lightning Master of Kang Ho."

"Oh! You must mean the Crimson Lightning Master, Ma Choong

Hyun. His fame reaches far and wide, even I have heard of him in this rural city.”

The Crimson Lightning Master Ma Choong Hyun was a very famed expert of the Heavenly Dao Gate. He was one of the top five experts of the Heavenly Dao Gate.

“And His Lordship knows of me?”

“Yes, he definitely knows of you. He even told me to become someone worthy of respect like you.”

“Ah!”

Hwang Chung was happy on the inside. Even though he couldn't verify that what Ma Jung Soo said was true, he was still pleased that Ma Jung Soo knew about something that happened in the past. But since Ma Jung Soo said that he heard it from the Crimson Lightning Master, it didn't seem like something Ma Jung Soo made it up. Even though he was on his guard he wanted to believe Ma Jung Soo.

“In this trip to San Dong the person who I truly wanted to meet was you, Hwang Bangju-nim.”

“Oh, so that's how it was.”

Even though he knew that Ma Jung Soo's words were intended to lure him but it was too sweet. He thought that this soft sweet tone

was indeed better than the rough and arrogant one. But it didn't seem like Ma Jung Soo was putting on an act to garner his favor. He really didn't have the reason to do so either, and how can a grown man put on such act like this?

“Now, please receive a drink from me.”

Ma Jung Soo poured Hwang Chung a drink respectfully. And the bad first impression that he made on the first meeting somehow turned good.

“Thank you for giving me your support. The donation is a great help.”

“It is our obligation to help you. Rather than that, thank you for your precious gift.”

“Of course I had to send you a gift. If my father found out that I had not done so I could have been in big trouble.”

This time he brought out Ma Bong Gi on top of Ma Choong Hyun. Since it came out naturally the doubt in Hwang Chung's heart seemed to have faded away.

“I have bigger plans for the future. I am expecting your support.”

“I will gladly help you.”

“To tell you the truth, I plan on working with only a few clans of San Dong. If too many Clans are involved it will only bring disorder.”

From this Hwang Chung could tell that his clan was one of the clans.

“Thank you for taking care of me like this.”

Since Ma Jung Soo’s first impression was rather not impressive, acting friendly like this made him have a better impression of Ma Jung Soo.

“Please don’t forget. Hwang Bangju-nim is someone that I respect.”

“You flatter me too much.”

The two clinked their glasses.

Half an hour later after they emptied the wine bottle and Hwang Chung left. He left in different mood than he entered. He wasn’t the only one who changed, Ma Jung Soo who was drinking by himself also changed. His mood seemed completely different than when he was drinking with Hwang Chung.

The door opened and Old Man Flower Fan and Si Gon entered.

Old Man Flower Fan said with a smile, “Job well done.”

Ma Jung Soo made a smirk and said, “Dealing with these country bumpkins is like taking candy from a baby.”

“But you can never lower your guard.”

“Don’t worry. I am someone who is always vigilant.”

Old Man Flower Fan was about to say something but didn’t. Someone who is vigilant never uses the word ‘vigilant’ in their sentence. But since everything went well there was no need to nag about it.

“Since everything is going according to plan I think it is time to move onto the next phase.”

Hearing that Ma Jung Soo’s eyes brightened.

“I can finally see her. The one who is called the Number One Beauty in San Dong.”

Old Man Flower Fan made a perplexed expression, “Your plan could go astray due to a girl.”

There was no way of suppressing his blood. Just like his father he lusts after women.

“She is not just any girl. Haven’t you heard, they say that she is the most beautiful woman in San Dong?”

“Just keep my advice in the back of your head.”

Old Man Flower Fan looked at Si Gon. He signaled Si Gon to back him up, but Si Gon pretended he didn’t see it and kept silent.

“Leave the girl problem to me and take care of the invitation.”

“Alright.”

“Ah. Where did that wretch disappear to?”

“I think she was standing outside a while ago.”

Ma Jung Soo approached the window. From far away he was able to see the woman who came to San Dong with him.

She was standing in the garden looking down at the pond.

“Have you found out anything about her?”

“Not yet.”

“Crap.”

On this trip she was someone whom Ma Bong Gi sent to go with him. But Ma Bong GI didn't say anything about her, so he didn't know whether she was here to protect him or to observe him.

He secretly tried to find information about her but it was no easy task.

Staring at her Ma Jung Soo wondered, "Where did she come from?"

I decided to head home.

Since I didn't have a method to deal with them yet, it would be bad if crossed path with them while staying at the Yang Clan manor.

Even though I was wearing a high-tier face alteration mask and most will not be able to recognize me, it was better to be safe.

I participated in the training of my Sword Sect and trained with them. The more uneasy the situation was the harder one had to concentrate. Because unexpected situations call for careful planning rather than needless worry.

Because I acted like always no one was able tell the difference except one person.

“Young master, is there something bothering you?”

Like a ghost he knew that something was wrong.

“There is someone that I want to kill.”

“Oh my.”

Surprised, Kwang Du asked me carefully, “Who might that poor soul be?”

“He is around twenty five years old and has many experts protecting him.”

Then Kwang Du said in a surprised tone, “Could it be...me?”

Seeing me smile Kwang Du smiled with me. I could see that he was trying his hardest to lighten my mood.

“How is it going with Do Soon-ee?”

Kwang Du said with a sigh, “That is ...”

It seemed that something was not working out for him.

“I got the courage to ask her out to have tea on our day off.”

“And she said?”

“She said she was busy.”

“I see.”

“No matter how busy she is if she liked me she would make time for me? Right?”

Seeing me nodding Kwang Du pouted

“Aren’t you agreeing with me too easily? What if she really is busy or she is too shy and wants to decline?”

“No. Be it men or women, if they like someone they will make the time. So, are you are not going to see her because you are busy?”

Kwang Du frowned, “So it really is?”

“I am sorry but yes.”

“Hmph! I will seek revenge. I’m going to make her regret. I will get stronger, make more money, and become so successful that she begs in front of me. Then I will say, ‘get lost! It’s already too late.’”

Since I did not say anything Kwang Du asked me, “Why aren’t you saying anything? Isn’t it refreshing?”

After a moment of silence I said, “Would it really be refreshing... after seeing the girl you liked cry?”

Kwang Du shook his head after imagining the scene.

“Just thinking about it makes me sad.”

“Yes, revenge is not for everyone. Kwang Du-ya, don’t they say first love never works out? Cheer up.”

I patted his shoulder and turned away.

Kwang Du screamed later, “And, she is not my first love! She really is not! I am someone who is experienced.”

Next day an unexpected news came.

“Ma Jung Soo said he was holding a banquet for the heirs of the major clans. And you received an invitation as well.”

This punk, he really is forcing us.

With this I could predict his intent.

What was one of greatest weakness that most clan leaders had in common? It was their descendants.

Since he was in a similar generation, if he naturally mingled with the heirs and brought them over to his side he would have an easier time controlling San Dong.

I was now certain. He didn't come to San Dong to make money. He came here to take over.

Next moment I thought of someone, "Ah"

Song Hwa Rin.

He most likely would have heard the rumors of how Song Hwa Rin was the Number One Beauty in San Dong.

Was he the type to stand still after seeing her?

Blood will never lie. He would act just like his father. Lusting after women. If he lived at the Heavenly Dao Gate House, he would most likely have learned it ten times over.

If not then he will offer her to his father. Since he is fifth in the line he will do anything to raise in his rank.

If he was the person I saw that day, both options were on the table.

Thinking about her and my father-in-law I will never allow her to be in such a dirty situation.

‘How should I take care of this?’

That night Song Hwa Rin was having a dream.

It was the day when Byuk Lee Dan made a scene at her house after getting drunk.

“Hmph! Do you think your looks will last a thousand years? You will get wrinkly when you get old. So don’t get too cocky.”

“Go back home!”

“No. I won’t go back like this.”

Byuk Lee Dan threw himself towards her. Song Hwa Ring pushed him away as he was forcefully trying to hug her. He fell down due to him being drunk.

“Go away! Come back when you sober up!”

“Push me? Bitch you dare push me?”

Byuk Lee Dan quickly got up and chased after her. This time Song Hwa Rin grabbed his arms. He was reeking of alcohol.

“You want to see those punks outside right? That’s why you want to send me away right?”

“Stop saying weird things. What do you see me as?”

She gripped his hand harder.

Byuk Lee Dan said mockingly, “With that sort of martial arts you dare ignoring me?”

She took a deep breath and let go of his hands

Byuk Lee Dan said, “You are mine. You were mine since you were born.”

“Stop joking around. I am not yours!”

Byuk Lee Dan said with a doubtful eye, “What you have someone else? Yeah? ...”

Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack!

Unable to hold back her anger she started throwing her fists.

Even though she didn't use her internal energy Byuk Lee Dan lost his balance and fell down since he was drunk.

Up to here was just like that day.

If things happened as normal Kwang Du would quickly take Byuk Lee Dan to his house.

But today's dream was different.

Lying on the ground Byuk Lee Dan said with a calm voice, "You said people never change?"

Byuk Lee Dan slowly picked himself up but this Byuk Lee Dan was different than before. A confident stare, a calm voice, this was the Byuk Lee Dan of the present.

"No, people are the ones who change the fastest."

The moment her eyes met with his calm eyes, "Ha!"

With a scream Song Hwa Rin woke from her dream.

She was full of cold sweat.

She could hear her guard's, Soo Hwan's voice, "Miss are you alright?"

"I am."

She got off her bed and sat down at the table. She poured herself a cup of tea and drank it.

"Huuu"

With a big sigh she looked outside the window. It was early in the morning.

"I am coming in."

Soo Ran came in regardless of the answer.

"Miss", Soo Ran asked with a worried look.

"Was it the same dream as before?"

Song Hwa Rin was having the same nightmare ever since her return.

"No, it was a different dream today."

"What was the dream about?"

Just like the previous nightmare she didn't tell Soon Ran-ee.

“Don't worry too much. It been a while since I came home and I have become too lax.”

This was something Song Hwa Rin always said.

Soon Ran looked at her with a worried look since she couldn't believe that she was having nightmares because she was being lax. And it had been six month since her return.

“Miss, I think you should go see a doctor.”

“I said I am alright!”

At that moment one of the maids came and made a report, “Master Byuk came over for a visit.”

Song Hwa Rin was surprised.

“Byuk Lee Dan came over this early? Did he come to meet with my father?”

Then the maid said something she would never have expected, “No. He said he wanted to meet you.”

Chapter 38: The Method Of Avoiding The Wind (2)

I waited for her at the Guest Pavilion. Normally speaking, I would've gone to meet my father-in-law face-to-face in order to say my greetings, but I chose not to do so today. Thirty minutes later, Song Hwa Rin arrived, with a perplexed expression on her face.

“You came here to meet me?”

She had a very nice aroma. She smelled like she'd just gotten out of the bath. When I saw her in spring, she'd looked like a blooming spring flower, but now she was akin to the fall sky.

“Shall we go for a stroll?”

After a moment of hesitation she nodded.

We headed towards the garden together. It was still early in the morning, thus there were hardly any people around.

“How've you been?”

She answered, “Training... lots of training. It's been extremely repetitive. What about you?”

“I've been training too.”

“I heard the news about you forming the lesser sword sect. I also heard that you took down a group of bandits?”

“We were just lucky.”

“Was that really the reason?”

It seems that she’s observing me. She seems to have finally accepted the fact that I’ve changed.

“Why did you act like you did? Did you really want to divorce me?”

In her shoes she probably could see it like that.

“It wasn’t that I was acting like that—I really was scum back then.”

“And you changed after getting beaten up by me?”

“Yes.”

“And you want me to believe that?”

“You have to. Because that’s the truth.”

She deeply sighed and said, “I really don’t know.”

“There’s also one thing that I really don’t know about”

“What?”

“Didn’t you say it before? That there was a reason that you hate the previous Mengju.”

She gave me a small grin. “Why? Are you that curious?”

“Yeah. I am that curious.”

“But why? You aren’t related to the previous Mengju, are you?”

It was hard to find the right answer. I almost said that I respected him, but I decided to give her an improvised answer. “No particular reason. You know, something like, ‘Once you become curious about something, you’ll really want to get to the bottom of it. If you don’t, you’ll just keep getting more curious.’”

She smiled. It was the first time she’d smiled in a long while. No, was it the first time she’d smiled?

The answer that I gave her was probably a better answer than something along the lines of just respecting the Mengju.

“So it’s not even that great of a reason. I should’ve told you sooner.”

“Well, you can tell me now.”

“There is a person that I really hate. That person, in turn, reveres the previous Mengju almost like a god. Since the person who I hate likes him so much, I came to dislike him. This is quite a stupid reason to dislike him, don’t you think?”

“Who’s it that you hate?”

Her face darkened. It seems that I’ve touched on a personal matter.

“Let’s stop here.”

“Alright. Thank you for telling me.”

“What’s there to be thankful for. Well, regardless, for what reason did you come to meet me today?”

Contrary to the light mood, I said something that was pretty heavy.

“I want to exchange pointers with you.”

“What?” Song Hwa Rin’s eye became round. I think this was the first time I’d seen her this surprised.

“Let’s spar for a round.”

She asked me with a questionable face, “Is this for real?”

“Yeah.”

“...And the reason?”

“Revenge for that day.”

Song Hwa Rin looked at me flabbergasted.

The last time that we’d parted ways, the last word she’d said to me were, ‘I don’t understand you’. However, considering the fact that I’d come to ask for an exchange of pointers, she was definitely confused.

“Really, I don’t...”

It seems that she was trying her best to figure me out. Well, it’s not like she’ll ever be able to.

After biting her lip, she agreed, “Alright, let’s do it.”

We stood face-to-face on the practice ground. Soo Ran was looking at the situation with a worried expression from far away.

“I don’t know what you’re up to, but since we’re exchanging pointers we should do it for real.”

“That’s what I wanted.”

“With real swords?”

I nodded, causing her to be surprised yet again. She’d just asked to get rid of the possibility, but I’d answered with a yes. With real swords, one wrong move could result in a major injury, or even death. On top of that, this was our first time facing off against one another, thus neither of us knew what sort of technique the other would use.

She was nervous. If it was the me from before, she definitely wouldn’t have agreed. However, she got the feeling that if it was the me of now, she could agree to it.

“Alright. Then... you can’t get too excited.”

Hearing her warn me, I nodded. “Alright.”

She slowly drew her blade.

I also slowly drew my blade and proceeded to approach her.

Stab!!!

She lightly stabbed her sword towards me. It was a variant of a probing move.

Tiing!!!

I easily parried.

Our swords clashed again.

Clang! Chang ! Clang!

It became an exchange of light blows, as there was no need for us to go all out right from the beginning.

It was as I'd expected: She was quite proficient with her skills. Her footwork was superb, while her basics were sharp. Her sword art also seemed extremely familiar. I got the feeling that her master was someone that I knew.

Clang! Chang ! Clang!

As we exchanged blows, I slowly raised the tempo.

She didn't notice that I was the one in control of the fight. Considering the fact that she could get hurt, I made sure I controlled everything down to the finest detail. I pressured her, I was pressured, I made a risky attack, went back to tightly defending... this continued onwards.

Due to my extravegant planning, she was fully immersed in the fight and was swinging her sword madly. I pressured her to her limit. I didn't give her any time to think about anything else. This was probably the first time that she'd experienced something like this.

Once I believed that she'd passed her limits, I dodged her attack and swung at her neck.

She tried to block it, but was too late. "Ah!"

If this had been for real, she would've lost her head, but I turned my sword sideways and hit her with the blunt side.

Smack! My blade landed on her shoulder.

"Kuahh!"

She raised her sword and tried to block my attack.

Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack!

I continuously attacked her shoulder, ribs, and stomach. My last two blows landed on her face.

“Asgassii!”

Soo Ran rushed to Song Hwa Rin’s side to make sure she was okay. Thankfully, she was still consciousness.

After confirming this, Soo Ran started berating me, “Are you crazy?! How could you do this?!”

“This was a fair fight. Did you expect me to go easy on her, just because she’s female?”

Hearing my words, Soo Ran couldn’t say anything. She frowned.

I knew that she was pretty angry, but I added something. This was something that I really needed to say so that it became more believable. “This is revenge for last time.”

Soo Ran’s face became even uglier. She really wanted to jump at me.

However, Song Hwa Rin grabbed her arm. When Soo Ran looked back towards her, Song Hwa Rin was shaking her head. She was telling her not to.

“...I lost. That, and...”

From the ground, she stared at me with her eyes half opened. It wasn't a stare full of resentment.

“...that last move...?”

She'd been able to sense it.

I gave her a mischievous smile and nodded. I hadn't hit her just to win. Through our exchange, I'd sensed a major flaw in her sword art. And it was with one of the most important stances of it. Thus, I clearly saw through it and took advantage of it.

If she wasn't able to correct this weakness by herself, she could be killed by anyone that sees through it. And Song Hwa Rin had just realized it through my last attack. She never would've thought that her flawless sword stance would crumble this easily. She realized that it wasn't just luck that I'd been able to see through her flaw.

“Later...” She said before passing out. Did she want to say that she wanted to have another round of sparring later? Or something else?

Soo Ran picked her up and rushed inside. Even though everyone might worry about her condition, they didn't have anything to worry about, as I'd hit her smart about how I hit her. She'd be bedridden for about ten days, and her face would be bruised for awhile, but she'd be perfectly fine after a month or so.

Had I come here just to let her gain some real experience, or just to expose the flaw in her sword art?

Of course—not. I'd come here because of Ma Jung Soo.

I'd seen how he took care of business. He'd make some sort of an excuse to get close to her, then would visit her at her house the next day. However, after seeing her like this, he wouldn't be able to do anything to her. If he still tried to approach her like this, then I'll definitely kill him. I don't care if the entire Heavenly Dao Gate comes to San Dong because of it; I'll take care of them when that happens.

Originally, I wanted to go directly to Song Wu Kyung and tell him the truth. I wanted to ask him to send Song Hwa Rin far away. There was a possibility that she'd say no, but if she did leave, there's a possibility that she could be in more of a danger since she'd be out of my sight, considering the fact that he could send some men after her. And I gave some other excuse he would try to find out what happened. Thus, if she was lying in bed with real injuries, he wouldn't be able to do anything, which was a good enough reason. Even though I'd been reborn, it was revenge from before. This was the best option I had available to buy some time with.

Since I'd taken such a drastic measure, I felt sorry for her and her father. But in the given time that I had, I couldn't find a simpler method. I wasn't Kal Sa Ryang. All of this could very well be me overthinking my bad premonition; Ma Jung Soo might not even have any interest in Song Hwa Rin. However, I'd done this just in

case. As they always say: You can never be too prepared.

I headed straight home. There was something else I needed to do before attending the banquet. If my objective was simply to kill Ma Jung Soo, it would've been easy no matter who my opponent was, as that was the thing I did best. However, my objective was to rob him of everything he had, which was no simple task. Considering the fact that I usually leave all the planning to Kal Sa Ryang, it was pretty hard trying to do it myself now.

However I was certain that getting rid of his money would be more effective than killing any the three experts that he'd brought. If his money was gone, he'd be confused and there'd be disorder in his camp. This was the power of money. No matter how close you are to someone, money can cause a divide among you.

The question now was where his money was kept, and who controlled it. Was it Ma Jung Soo himself? Old Man Flower Fan? Si Gon? Or that mysterious women?

Well we can check Old Man Flower Fan off the list, since he's old and an outsider. There's also no way that Ma Jung Soo would trust an outsider with his money. Thus, using similar reasoning we can check off that mysterious women.

Then was it Si Gon?

But Si Gon is a true Martial Artist. There's no way he'd be good at

dealing with money.

Then that only leaves Ma Jung Soo himself. Is he personally in charge of his funds?

This has the highest probability of being the truth.

After hearing my summons, Kwang Du quickly came to my room.

“Did you call me?”

“I need you to look into something.”

Seeing my expression, Kwang Du became nervous. “What is it?”

“You should have heard about an important person from the Heavenly Dao Gate arriving couple of days ago.”

“Of course.”

He looked around, then lowered his voice and asked, “I heard that he ripped off all the clans.”

I proceeded to whisper in his ear, “Why are you whispering, this is my room.”

He whispered back, “It would be bad this reached him, considering that he is the descendant of the Mengju, and from one of the five great clans of the Central Plains.”

“Then I think you’re in trouble.”

“Why?”

“Because you might have to investigate him.”

Kwang Du stared blankly at me and blinked a couple times. As I’d said before, the expressions that Kwang Du makes were what made me love him.

“So you’re serious.”

“The best way to forget about a girl is by doing work.”

“I think that I’d be able to forget about a hundred girl doing this.”

I smiled and raised my tone back to normal. “It’s nothing too serious, just relax.”

Ridding himself of his playfulness, Kwang Du asked, “What do I need to do?”

“He wants to build a school in Jae Nam. I want you to go to Jae Nam and look for anything and everything related to it. Everything from where he’s going to build it, to who’s in charge of construction, to when the construction starts; anything that you can find. There’s definitely something that they’re doing in the shadow.”

I told him all of the details regarding the construction of the martial arts school that I’d heard during our first meeting with Ma Jung Soo. Then I gave him two thousand nyang to use.

“You’re giving me this much?”

“If you need to use it, then use it.”

“Yes.”

“And make sure you come back as soon as possible.”

“Understood young master.”

I knew that I could trust Kwang Du with this sort of work—the type where you blend into the crowd to investigate something. He had a natural talent for interacting with others due to his innocent personality.

I felt that he might be feeling lonely, so I said a joke to him,

“Should I send Do Soon-ee with you?”

“NO!”

He answered without hesitation.

“Why? Have you already gotten over your feelings?”

“NO! My heart still beats whenever I see her.”

“Then why?”

“Because I don’t want to have hard feelings for her. I don’t want to burn any bridges since we aren’t even in a relationship.”

I nodded in agreement.

“Then, I’ll be off.”

“Go on horseback.”

Kwang Du replied with pride, “This time I’ll come back as a horse riding expert, no, I’ll be a centaur when I get back.”

After sending Kwang Du away, I headed towards the Yang Clan, where the banquet was going to be held. Though there were many reasons why I hated attending them, this was another reason

Banquets will make people lose concentration.

However, since I knew that, this would be my chance to strike.

‘Now that I’m coming to get you, just how prepared are you?’

Chapter 39: The Beginning Of My The Banquet (1)

The banquet took place at the Yang Clan's manor; it was the same place that the meeting with all the Clan Leader had been held.

I arrived at the Yang Clan Manor hours before the banquet even started. I proceeded to meet with Jung Yeo in the secret room beside Ma Jung Soo's bedroom. Showing the talisman he gave me last time let me bypass all of the guards.

“Is there some sort of treasure vault that he's using right now?”

“Yes. There's one inside of his bedroom.”

“Is it password protected?”

“Yes. If you enter the wrong number three consecutive times, it will lock itself for a day. After that, the key smith will have to come and open it.”

“So he must've changed the password...”

“Indeed. He asked me to tell him the original password, and how to change it. He naturally changed it.”

“How big is the vault?”

“It’s attached to the wall. If you’re asking whether or not you can simply take the entire vault, it’s impossible. The vault itself is also made from reinforced steel, making it impossible to cut open—even with sword-ki. And if you do forcefully attempt to open it, it will set off an alarm.”

“Is there any possibility that he’s entrusted his money to a bank?”

“That’s extremely unlikely, as neither he nor any member of his party have visited any banks. I’ve had my men observing their movements.”

It seems that there were a lot of watchful eyes that would’ve noticed one of them enter a bank.

“So their money should be in the treasure vault.”

“I believe so.”

He’d probably predicted where I was going with this, but I still stated my intentions, “I’ll tell you the truth Jung Bangju. I plan on robbing him of everything that he owns.”

Jung Yeo gave me a light smile. “You’re truly incredible.”

Rather than worry, he was showing awe. It seems that I was the

one who was worried.

“If my plan succeeds, you might be in a tough spot.”

This would happen in the Yang Clan’s manor, after all.

“He’ll never doubt me, don’t worry. I’ll be with someone who can confirm my alibi.”

“I don’t have any plans yet. I’m waiting for an opportunity to appear at today’s banquet, as he won’t be in his room during that time.”

“I believe that you will succeed.”

I proceeded to ask him something else, “Is there any other way to get into his room than through the main door?”

With a mischievous smile on his face, Jung Yeo asked me, “Do you know what kind of person the previous gaju was?”

The previous gaju was someone that I had personally killed with my own hands, Yang Gi Chul. He was someone that had been full of greed and doubt.

“He prepared many hidden corridors, just in case he needed to quickly escape. As such, there’s a hidden corridor that leads directly to the guest pavilion. It’s made so well that, unless you’re

a professional, you wouldn't ever be able to find it. You could even escape from a room full of people without any of them even noticing you leave. There's a passageway to the outer shed in that corridor."

He told me where the exit was, as well as where the outer shed led to. Thankfully the outer shed wasn't that far from where the banquet was taking place at. However, I told him to place a cart in the corridor for easy transportation, just in case. My greatest concern was the combination for the safe. Without the combination, all of my preparations would be useless.

How could I find that out?

The banquet was grand. There was good food, wine, and even veteran musicians and dancers performing. I hardly saw banquets as grand as this even as the Mengju. The reason that Ma Jung Soo was holding such a grand banquet was quite clear: He wanted to show off to others. This definitely because the quality and size of a banquet has an influence on others.

If you thought about it, the Mengju Pavillion was the same. The exterior was ridiculously large and expansive. It was quite a walk from the entrance to the Master's Chair. It was mainly for security, but there were other reasons, such as intimidating the enemy, and magnifying the status of the Mengju. This banquet was similar.

There were many youths gathered at the banquet hall. There were some new faces, but I'd met most of them during the banquet

that was held at my house. I stayed hidden within the crowd and observed Ma Jung Soo. He really dealt with the heir well. He investigated everything about them, starting with what type of personality they had, what they liked, what their family situation was like, etc. Since he knew everything about these twenty-something year old youths, he was putting on a show by acting all glorious at one point, and then humane the next, catching their attention with his antics.

From the position of those that had been invited, they had to look good in front of Ma Jung Soo. They'd arrived at this banquet in a nervous mood, but since it was fun, magnificent, and the host was treating them well, they obviously became both less nervous and less vigilant.

Ma Jung Soo even started forming brotherly relationships with a few of the heirs. They were the young masters of the Clear Tree Clan, Nine Dragon Clan, Western Saber Clan, as well as a few other clans that he'd already made some secret agreements with. I honestly thought this was a really clever move. Since Ma Jung Soo favored these few, others were influenced. It's said that the human heart is as fickle as a feather. Even though they might not want to be too friendly with Ma Jung Soo, if they saw others forming brotherly relations with him, they wouldn't want to be left behind. And if they weren't chosen today, they'd have to report it to their fathers. What parent wouldn't want their child to do their best to get close to Ma Jung Soo? Either way, this was a perfectly calculated action.

I had a strong desire to tell these youths that, if you form a brotherly relationship with a good person, that person is doing it so that they can maintain that relationship; however, but if you

form a brotherly relationship with an evil person, that person is doing it to use you.

Si Gon was always near Ma Jung Soo. It seems that Si Gon is in charge of personally guarding him. He's stayed vigilant the entire time. However, Old Man Flower Fan and that mysterious woman are nowhere to be seen. As such, just in case, I decided to check out the window, but they were still gone. It seems that Si Gon is always near Ma Jung Soo to protect him, while the other two are moving independently.

I gathered every scrap of information that I could about him.

Even though I tried my best to stay out of his line of sight, he still managed to find me. He casually approached me and greeted me in a friendly manner, "Byuk-Kongja, how have you been?"

I awkwardly smiled and replied, "Have you been well?"

Neither of us had any friendly intentions.

After our greeting, he said something as if he'd suddenly remembered something, "Ah! I heard that Miss Song is bedridden today."

"Yes, I know."

"I heard that you beat her up?"

When I heard this, I became certain. He definitely had an interest in Song Hwa Rin, considering the Song Clan would never have told him the details. He'd investigated everything about her.

It was a good thing that I'd made her bedridden.

“For what reason did you do that?”

This punk. First he rips others off, and now he want to take other's women? He plans on doing everything that he wants here, eh?

I had to forcefully hold back my itchy hands. I really wanted to kill him with a single stroke of my blade right now. But rather showing my anger, I smiled. “Well... it somehow happened.”

I wonder how much he knows about me. He most likely has all the basic information about me—about how I'd been nothing better than scum until now.

“Alright. I'll tell you the truth. She brought up the word ‘divorce’.”

Since the rumors have already spread, he definitely already knows about them. But I acted as if I was revealing a big secret. “She and I have been engaged since birth. And yet, she dared to say something such as ‘divorce’? That's unforgivable.”

This was the most reasonable excuse that I could think of.

Then I added, “The last time I got drunk, I had a bout with her, but I ended up losing miserably. Of course, it was because of the alcohol. However this time, I made sure to discipline her when I got my revenge.”

He probably know up to here. Anyway, this was a perfect way for me to hide my true intentions. And in his eyes, I might have gotten some points for disciplining his women.

“Hahaha, I think you were quite successful in your revenge. I heard that she took lessons from an expert.”

“Either way, she’s just a girl.”

“Hahaha. It seem that you’re a man, my brother. A true man.”

“That’s just how I am.”

“Well brother, let’s have a meal together one day; so that you can surprise your brother’s eyes.”

“Hahaha. Good, very good.”

“Let’s say... ten days from now. She should be better then. Let’s do it then.”

This b*tch. It seems that he's already found out when she'll be able to get out of bed.

There was a saying that I'd always said to the younger generation when I was still Mengju: 'Be careful of beauty.'

This was something that I'd thought of back when I'd met a youth back at a restaurant, and this is something that I was thinking right now.

Song Hwa Rin's beauty can also be a curse.

Look, aren't I correct? Because of his interest in her, he'd met with me.

Ma Jung Soo went towards the center of the room and signaled Si Gon. When he reached the center, he said in loud voice, "I have something to show you all."

After getting the signal, Si Gon left the room for a second, before coming back with a sword.

The decorations on it alone were enough for someone to be all to guess that it was no ordinary sword.

Ma Jung Soo proceeded to draw the blade from its sheath.

Shiiiiing!!!

Everyone was amazed by the sword.

“This was one of the swords that the previous Mengju used: The Heavenly Origin Sword.”

Everyone was surprised by Ma Jung Soo’s word. However, was there be anyone else who could be more surprised than me?

It really was one of the weapons that I used to use, the Heavenly Origin Sword.

I got a bit emotional from seeing my sword after such a long time. There were five swords that I’d used in my previous life.

The Heavenly Origin Sword, the Heavenly Mist Sword, the Heavenly Twilight Sword, Frostmourne, and the Divine Sword of King Shura.

They were all divine sword that had different shapes, sizes, and personalities. However, the one that I had been the closest to was the Divine Sword of King Shura. It had received its name as the Divine Sword of King Shura because I sometimes would want it to decimate the enemy like an Ashura, while other times I would want it to rule over them like a divine king would. That had been the weapon that accompanied me everywhere during the battle against the Demon Alliance.

Others might believe that all five of those swords are the same,

but those that do, definitely don't know the true value of the Divine Sword of King Shura. Even if you were to put the other four blades together, it still wouldn't be worth it, considering that it was the Divine Sword of King Shura.

Now that I thought about it, I wonder what happened to him?

Had Ma Bong Gi took it? Would it be put in a weapons hall to be displayed as a treasure? Or did Kal Sa Ryang take it? If he did...

Anyway, the Heavenly Origin sword was nothing compared to the Divine Sword of King Shura, but it still wasn't a bad divine blade.

Ma Jung Soo proudly stated, "My father personally gifted me with this blade."

From this I was able to guess another important thing. He was here because Ma Bong Gi had sent him here. If not that, then there was no way for Ma Bong Gi to give such a blade to Ma Jung Soo. This sword was meant for Ma Jung Soo to use for his authority as a descendant of the Mengju.

"Is there someone who wants to have it?"

When everyone heard this, their heart skipped a beat. There wasn't a way to price it, considering the fact that was a weapon used by the previous Mengju.

“I’ll give to the one who’s able to become my true brother...”

He made it sound like he could actually give it out.

Meanwhile, I was laughing on the inside.

He would just use and throw away that ‘true brother’. But the ones who were gathered here were all young masters in their twenties who would succeed their family. They were inexperienced in reading Ma Jung Soo true intent, and because of that, they had to look good in front of Ma Jung Soo. But now, with the addition of the Heavenly Origin Sword, their hearts were all over the place. There was another thing that they had to think about.

Regardless of the how much money Ma Jung Soo had, that blade was something that I had to take back. I didn’t want it to be in his dirty hands. Even though, if I take it back I can’t use it in the open public since it is such a fancy blade. I need to either disguise it or sell it on the black market. Since it’s the Divine Sword of the King Shura, either option is available.

Ma Jung Soo continued, “Since the future of San Dong is in the hands of this youth, I want to make a proposal.”

“What is it?”

“What if we held regular meetings?”

“Very good idea.”

“Hahaha. Cheers”

Everyone raised their wineglass. The mood had turned extremely good. Si Gon took the Heavenly Origin Sword and went out. But at that time, I also made my exit.

Si Gon slowly turned the lock. The moment he put in the correct numbers, the Vault made a loud noise and opened.

He lowered his body to put the Heavenly Origin Swords into the Vault.

The next moment, he turned around and unsheathed his sword .

Swoosh!

Smack!

Before he even had the time to pull out his blade I smacked him square in the face, causing him to fall down.

I was one step faster than him. I arrived at the room earlier than Si Gon, and was hiding myself. Since the vault was located next to the bed, I was hidden quite close to it—inside of the wardrobe. I

killed off all my killing intent and fighting spirit, then began to wait like a predator. The moment I heard the vault open, I made my move. My movement was hidden due to the loud noise of the vault opening.

The best case would have been finding out the number and opening it myself; however, the place that I was hidden in didn't have a clear line of sight to the vault. If something went wrong they—could place the blame on Jung Yeo. As such, I made my move. Even though I hadn't been certain that I could take on Si Gon, but I'd had the element of surprise. I was able to knock Si Gon unconscious.

I pulled everything from inside of the treasure vault into the bag that I'd prepared beforehand. I didn't have the time to check what was in it. After putting everything in the bag, I disappeared like a ghost. This happened in the blink of an eye.

A few moments later.

The door of the banquet opened roughly as Jung Yeo and Old Man Flower Fan rushed in. Old Man Flower Fan whispered something in Ma Jung Soo's ear.

Ma Jung Soo eyes widened and said, "Everyone be quiet!"

Suddenly the banquet hall became silent.

After the Old Man Flower Fan finished whispering in his ears, Ma

Jung Soo's expression became ugly.

He quickly followed the two people and stopped at the entrance, "Find the bastard who isn't here!"

Ma Jung Soo, Old Man Flower Fan, and Jung Yeo quickly looked around and began to check people

When it was my turn I asked in a surprised expression, "What is it?"

I'd just came back from dealing with Si Gon. I left the treasure back behind in the secret corridor, and got here as soon as I could.

All the young masters that were within the hall had never left the exit. But even if someone left, they still weren't nearly as skilled as Si Gon. So Ma Jung Soo were checked first just in case.

Ma Jung Soo quickly left the banquet and said, "I think that this concludes today's banquet. Please return home."

I was smiling as he left.

I'm sorry, but this is the beginning of my banquet.

A banquet that you will never be able to escape.

Chapter 40: Beginning Of My Banquet (2)

When I returned home it was pretty chaotic. Since he heard the news about me beating up Song Hwa Rin, Song Wu Kyung came to our house.

“You stupid rascal! You lame punk!” My mother was all up in the air hitting my back.

And my father was busy trying to hold her back, “Please hold it in wife!”

I remembered the day I woke up into the body of Byuk Lee Dan, that day too, my mother was hitting me. Ah, the life of a man is so pitiful, I get hit when I get beaten up by a girl and I also get hit when I beat up a girl.

“Why did you do it?”

My mother was truly angry. She wanted the best between for and Song Hwa Rin. But after hearing that I made Song Hwa Rin bedridden for a couple of days, why wouldn't she be like this?

My father as well as Song Wu Kyung would be feeling the same but they are just not expressing it.

The person who should be the angriest was Song Wu Kyung.

“I am Sorry”

But father made the most perplexed expression. He was thinking how could I do something like this; that was miles apart from how I was when I shared a drink with him.

Song Wu Kyung approached me, I wouldn't be surprised if a hand came out since I was already prepared to get beaten up.

Rather than a fist he asked me a question, “Why did you do it?”

“Rin-ee and I wanted to exchange pointer. Since she became so strong I had to try my hardest. And somehow this happened.”

“Is that the only reason?”

He was asking me whether this was a revenge from the last time. I might have told Hwa Rin-ee's guard Soo Ran that this was the revenge from last time since I wanted Ma Jung Soo to hear it, but in front of Song Wu Kyung I couldn't say that.

“Yes. That was my only intention.”

“Is that the truth?”

“Yes”

After observing me with a cold expression he loosened up and started laughing.

“Hahaha. It seems that our son-in-law is pretty strong.”

Hearing something I never expected I was surprised. It seemed father was surprised as well.

Song Wu Kyung looked at my father and said, “As you know my daughter’s martial arts aren’t just for show and she even received lessons from a well-known expert. To be able to beat her in an exchange. Don’t you think this is a great achievement?”

Oh my! Who would have thought that he would compliment me.

My father shook his head and said, “But he hurt Hwa Rin-ee. He is at fault.”

“There are bound to be one or two accidents during an exchange.”

“He should have been more careful. He should be punished.”

Song Wu Kyung nodded in agreement, “Yes. He should be punished. Entrust that to me.”

He looked back at me, “Are you ready to be punished?”

“Of course.”

“Alright. I want you to visit Rin-ee regularly after she gets better. That is your punishment. Alright.”

Due to the mood I could not say no, “I will try my best to.”

Even though it was an ambiguous answer, Song Wu Kyung accepted it, “All right then”

Then he looked at my father and said, “Let’s have a drink since we are all here”

My mother who was watching all this with an anxious expression finally relaxed.

“Should I show off my skill for today? It has been a while since you tasted my dish.”

Then Song Wu Kyung looked at my father with a conflicted look. This was a rescue signal. Although my mother was good at everything else her cooking skills were not the best. The term ‘not the best’ was a generalization, in truth her cooking skills were demonic.

After looking at the two people my father couldn’t say anything and looked toward the window. How could my father’s taste be any different than others, but since he truly loved my mother he didn’t say anything.

Then Song Wu Kyung said to my mother, “There is no need to overwork yourself.”

“Your expression looks like someone is forcefully trying to feed you poison.”

“Hu hu. There is no way. I think you are mistaken.”

Watching Song Wu Kyung get all nervous my mother said while laughing, “I was just joking. I know the full extent of my cooking skill. I know that the only time you need my cooking skill is when you want to feed it to my enemies.”

“It’s not to that degree...”

After saying that he lamented what he said. But his words already told her the sad reality of her skills.

Then my mother said with a smile, “You are no fun since you are caught so easily.”

Song Wu Kyung replied laughing, “Hahaha, I wasn’t a fun fish since long ago.”

After tossing some more casual jokes back and forth they made their way out of the room.

I was certain that inside Song Wu Kyung wasn't all smiling and laughing. Which parent would feel good if their child was bedridden? He just wanted to keep a close relationship with my father. At the end of the day it looked as though this little incident wouldn't create a chip in their relationship.

The next dawn I went up to the cave where I opened all of my meridian points. Since this cave was really well hidden I visited this place every time I need to do something important.

From this encounter, I was able to figure out two things. One, Ma Jung Soo was targeting Song Hwa Rin, and two Ma Bong Gi was the one who was behind all this. In other words, Ma Bong Gi was starting his plan of expanding his influence throughout all of the Central Plain.

Would he only be making a move in San Dong City? I think not. He would have sent his descendants throughout all of the Central Plain and would do a similar thing.

This means I could have been poisoned, but I will not go crazy over some revenge. This was all the more reason why I should quickly get stronger. It's not like my life was cut short, I lived as long I could have lived so I made up my mind to live this life without think about revenge but ...

This was...no...

This was the Central Plain that I spent my entire life protecting. How hard had I tried to help those who were weak and poor from

those who had money and strength. But these motherf*ckers want to do something this fast. This wasn't something that I could tolerate about. I need to raise my strength so that I could stop this nonsense. 'You b*tches, just you wait!'

Controlling my anger I took out that bag and put it in front of me. This was everything that I robbed from Ma Jung Soo. I was so busy escaping that I didn't have to time to look at what I put in my bag so I was even more nervous than the time I bought the Bansho Root.

I opened that bag slowly. First, I took out the Heavenly Origins Sword.

Shiing!!

How long has it been since I last held this sword?

Actually, Heavenly Origin sword was not a sword that I personally liked. This sword was handed down by the previous Mengju so I used it for a while. After that it was kept safe at the Murim alliance, but who would have imagined that it would make its way back to me.

It felt different holding the Heavenly Origin Sword. Each divine sword had a different spirit. Even if I used this sword I would be three times stronger than using a regular sword. But I still cannot use this Heavenly Origin Sword since there are many who knows how this sword looks like.

Thus, I had three options. First I could bury this sword in the cave. Second I could sell it at the black market. Third I could disguise this weapon so that no one else could discern that this was the Heavenly Origin Sword.

I got rid of the idea of selling the sword. Although I am still at a time where I needed a lot of money but I didn't want to sell this sword. Even if I did sell it, since it was the previous Mengju's sword they wouldn't know the exact price of it also they could have an interest in me as follow me. It was completely different than when I went to buy some profound medicines.

I wasn't worried that Ma Jung Soo will search the black market since it was such a big place. If he wanted to do so he would have to move the whole Murim Alliance. But I was going to wear a face-mask so I would not be found.

So I was left with two choices. Do I hide it or do I disguise it?

In the end I decided to disguise it. If it was my personal Divine Sword of King Shura then I would have hidden it in a safe place until I got stronger. But since this was the Heavenly Origin Sword it wasn't that precious to me. If it served its purpose of helping me then that was all I needed it to do.

Since I was still weak this was going to be a great help.

Then I placed the Heavenly Origin Sword back down and took out something else from the bag.

This time I took out a bundle of banknotes. There were untraceable bank notes as well as personal bank notes which in total added up to eighty two thousand nyang. Fifty thousand nyang were personal bank notes while the other thirty two thousand were untraceable bank notes.

I couldn't use the fifty thousand nyang because it is traceable. So I decided to buy a very expensive item like the profound medicine with it since I could just eat it and no one would be able to find out about it. The thirty two thousand nyang I decided to place in a bank for safekeeping. Although I trusted Kong Soo Chan I didn't know what he would do. So I decided to keep it in case I need it for an emergency.

The next item that I took out were couple pieces of paper. After observing them for a while I figured that they were some documents from the Alliance. I didn't need them so I throw them away. It would drive Ma Jung Soo a little crazy but it wouldn't matter much if this paper disappeared since they were the ones with power.

The next item that I took out was a box that was the size of my arm. I didn't know what was in it so I slowly opened it. It could explode or there could be poison inside of it. But I didn't believe that. He would never place such a dangerous item together with his money and documents.

But just in case I held my breath and slowly opened the box.

“Ah!!!”

Seeing the item inside my heart cried in joy. There were nine green leaves, and a divine looking white flower. To my surprise the item inside of it was Nine-Leaved Divine Herb. Its properties were greater than the Thousand Year Bansho root. If the Bansho root gave from ten to fifteen years' worth of energy, then this Nine-Leaved Divine Herb will give fifteen to twenty years' worth. Since I bought the Bansho root for forty four thousand Nyang then this would sell for about seventy thousand nyang.

Whether someone from the San Dong Clan offered it to him or he bought it himself, this was one of my greatest prize that I got from him.

“Hahaha” since I was so happy laughter naturally came out. I felt even better since I stole it from Ma Jung Soo. I really wanted to raise my arms in joy.

After some time I calmed down and looked back down. I really wanted to give it to my parents or Kwang Du, but this was a critical time for me where I had to get stronger. If it was more effective for them to eat it then I would gladly give it up. But since I was still lacking in many ways I was in need of it more.

I immediately ate the Nine-Leaved Divine Herb. Since I was afraid I might miss even a slightest of energy I took great care in eating every part of it. As soon as it reached my stomach I felt its energy. I activated my cultivating technique the Heavenly Protection Technique.

WOOOOOO!!!!

All the energy started spreading throughout my body. This time I was able to absorb every last drop of the energy given off by the Nine-Leaved Divine Herb. I absorbed it faster than before since the Heavenly Divine Technique was fully incorporated into the body of Byuk Lee Dan.

After fully incorporating all energy into my body I circulated the energy that I had throughout my body. At this time, I had forty-four years' worth of energy. I succeeded in absorbing forty years of energy into my body.

“Hahaha”

Laughter came out again. Now all I needed was sixteen years more worth of energy to reach sixty years. If I trained the way that I have been doing it would take less than two years, or it could be faster if I come across another profound medicine.

I let go of all my excitement. At a time like this it was very important to remain calm. Then I looked through the bag again. the rest were just medicine for cuts, poison, and other common medicines. If I sold this I would at most get a couple hundred nyang; But I was going to use it.

I burned all the papers since I didn't need them,packed everything back into the bag and headed out the cave. The sun started rising from across the mountain. This was a great morning.

After watching the scene for a bit I rushed down the mountain.
Since there were many things to be done still.

Chapter 41: The Beginning Of My Banquet

(3)

Ma Jung Soo was sitting down with a stern face. After seeing the empty vault he didn't break even a single piece of furniture. This was the first time he was so mad that the thought of breaking anything didn't come to him.

Aside from him there were three others inside this room with a heavy atmosphere. The other three were Old Man Flower Fan, Si Gon, and the Mysterious Woman. There was a big bruise on Si Gon's face which made him feel more humiliated than having his arm cut off. Since he was someone prideful he might have even thought about committing a suicide.

But the first to wake from this heavy mood was Ma Jung Soo, "I couldn't even have a single bite."

He was lamenting the fact that he lost the Divine Nine-Leaved herb. The reason why he didn't eat it was because he was going to use it to lure the other youths. Since he showed the Heavenly Origin sword this time, he was going to show the Divine Nine-Leaved Herb the next time. By showing them the divine sword and profound medicine he was going to get their trust and interest. Of course he didn't have any intention of giving it to them, they were just baits but...

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Ma Jung Soo continuously smashed the table. The rage that he

had been holding back finally exploded. At a time like these when profound medicines are rare, who wouldn't be mad if they got their precious herbs stolen from them. The table finally shattered into pieces but no one inside the room said anything. If that rage was directed at them, then they could lose their life.

Ma Jung Soo asked angrily, "Have you not found out who it was?"

Old Man Flower Fan cautiously looked at Ma Jung Soo and said, "Jung Bangjoo sent out his men."

"And you think it's not him?"

Old Man Flower Fan stared at Ma Jung Soo in the eyes and said, "It's not his doing. He was with me when it happened."

Jung Yeo was very smart in choosing his alibi, he was with a person who could verify it right away.

"He could have sent his men"

"No one in the Yang Clan is such an expert as to knock out Si Gon in one hit. Even Jung Bangjoo doesn't have the skill to do so."

When he heard the word 'knocked out', Si Gon stare became filled with bloodlust.

Then Ma Jung Soo stared at Old Man Flower Fan and said, “Then you must be working with him.”

“How could you say such thing even if you are that angry?!”

“Angry? Do I look like I am angry?!”

Ma Jung Soo showed his teeth, “Do you think I am just angry? I am about to go crazy! If I catch that rat I will torture him until he dies. But I will never kill him, I will make him live in a world of torture.”

As he said that he flared his killing intent and Old Man Flower Fan flinched. Since he knew that those words were true he felt somewhat afraid. He didn’t know much about Ma Jung Soo but he knew about Ma Jung Soo’s evil intent.

Ma Jung Soo’s glare was now pointed toward Si Gon, “Have you gone mute?”

Si Gon hadn’t said a word since he entered this room.

He finally opened his dry mouth, “I am sorry”

His apologies made the mood even worse.

Old Man Flower Fan tried to lighten the mood, “I don’t think there is anyone that we met who is that much of an expert. Don’t

you think so?”

With that sentence Si Gon flinched. It sounded as if Old Man was doubting him.

“What do you mean?”

“I am not saying this because I suspect you.”

“Then why are you saying such a thing?”

“Why?”

This time Old Man Flower Fan flinched. Everyone could see that pressure that these two were giving off. Then Ma Jung Soo’s expression worsened. The person who was making things worse was the Mysterious Woman that was with them.

What if these two fought against each other, then he would have to discipline them. These stupid fools, but he couldn’t say anything.

The women didn’t say anything, she had her arms crossed just observing the situation. She was always like this. It didn’t matter what he did, she was always silent and observing as if she was testing him. If it wasn’t for his father, Ma Jung Soo would have slapped all of them.

Then Ma Jung Soo yelled, “Everyone shut up!”

With this the staredown between Si Gon and Old Man Flower Fan ended.

Then Ma Jung Soo said to the two of them, “You aren’t the only ones who are suspicious.”

Their sights naturally turned towards the woman. However, even with their stare the woman didn’t show any reaction.

It was suspicious if you were calm at a time that you had to be bewildered. But since the woman was even calmer than that, she was not even suspicious. She looked like a person who had no interest in this.

Then Si Gon said, “It’s not her”

Then Old Man Flower Fan question, “How are you so certain?”

“The opponent wasn’t a female.”

“Didn’t you say you didn’t see the face. Are you saying this because it might hurt your pride?”

Then Si Gon flinched. The words that Old Man Flower Fan said were pulling on his nerve. However, he wasn’t going to fight him since he is a martial artist while Old Man Flower Fan was not. Old

Man Flower Fan was someone who was driven by power.

Then Old Man Flower Fan added more insult to the injury, “Not that I am trying to hurt you pride, but the situation calls for it.”

“I am certain it wasn’t a woman”

Old Man Flower Fan took a step back, “If you insist.”

Then Si Gon looked at Ma Jung Soo and said, “It wasn’t that I was surprised... the opponent was truly strong.”

It was something that only the person who was hit knew. If the assailant had tried to kill him he would not have praised them this highly but the assailant didn’t try to do that, but instead knock him out. This was something that was harder to do than to kill in that situation since they had to control their strength perfectly. If the assailant wanted to kill him he would have already been dead.

Ma Jung Soo made perplexed expression, “Why would someone that strong stoop so low as to steal? He probably would have some sort of grudge against me.”

Then Old Man Flower Fan answered, “Maybe he was aiming for the Heavenly Origin Sword?”

“Even if he stole it he would not be able sell it. While the black market might buy it, it would place a huge burden on them.”

“Probably.”

Nodding, Old Man Flower Fan thought of something, “What if it was the work of one of the other successors?”

Ma Jung Soo stood up and said, “Yes that’s it!”

That was the only explanation.

It didn’t seem like the Yang Clan would do something as stupid as that since they could gain more by getting his favor. They couldn’t have stolen from the vault since it contained a sword that they couldn’t even sell.

“Why didn’t I think of that?”

This time his father sent out many of his descendants to different areas. This was a form of test. To be able to hire an expert who was able to knock out Si Gon in a single blow, there was only one explanation. It was one or maybe couple of his brothers plotting against him. Especially the ones who were competing for the successor’s seat had many experts under them.

“These b*tches” Ma Jung Soo grinded his teeth.

Old Man Flower Fan calmly said, “First we need to regain our composure and decide how to move forward. Even though we

don't know who it is, if you lose your composure than you are just doing what they want you to do.”

Ma Jung Soo nodded ,calming himself and sat back down. Seeing that he calmed down old man Flower Fan added, “Even though we may have lost a sword and some money we are still alive and well. We can always gather more money, and we can take back the sword anytime.”

“Your words are wise”

“First we must gather some money since it might affect the construction.”

“How much do we need?”

“To start the construction we need ten thousand nyang and later on we are going to need a hundred thousand nyang.”

“Shit!”

From his position where he lost all his money getting ten thousand nyang wasn't going to be easy.

Ma Jung Soo showed his teeth like a predator and said, “Make a plan to gather the money.”

I bought a new face alteration mask. Since I was going to use it and throw it away I bought a mid-tier mask.

Since I changed my voice as well as my walking habits I was like a different person. With all that preparation I entered the Shrouded City merchant guild and met with the old man who sold me the profound medicine before.

I was going to use the fifty thousand traceable banknote to buy some profound medicine. Finding a way to trade this for money was very dangerous so it was better to use it get something even if it was overpriced.

“I heard that you came here to buy some profound medicine?”

“Yes”

Since I used different tone and attitude in my previous visit he was unable to find out who I was. However even if he find out it wouldn't have been a problem since I disguised my face and my voice back then too.

“Do you have some?”

“We do. But they aren't the best quality”

“What do you mean?”

“We currently have six roots of white thorowax. It is said that they can only give two maybe three years worth of energy.”

“How much is it?”

“Each root is nine thousand Nyang”

So six root meant fifty four thousand Nyang.

“Relatively expensive.”

“These are times when these medicines are precious”

Last time I was able to get fifteen years’ worth of energy from the Bansho root for forty four thousand nyang. But six root of thorowax would at most increase the cultivation by eighteen years.

One might think that it is more expensive since you get more out of it; however, the effect of the root will diminish as you continuously used it. If you wanted to get the full effect of two years from these roots you had to eat them a year apart from each other so that your body would not build tolerance for it. But I didn’t have time to do that so if I ate them all at the same time I would get at most ten years of energy. Considering the price it was rather expensive, but it wasn’t wise to buy something like a weapon or gear since it can leave behind evidence. It was better to get this and just eat it leaving no evidence.

“I will buy all six roots so sell it to me for fifty thousand nyang.”

Since they were strict on the price the old man hesitated for a while.

Then he nodded his head and said, “Alright. It is better to sell it when there is a buyer.”

He showed me the roots.

With that I bought six roots for fifty thousand nyang.

This fifty thousand nyang was traceable but the Shrouded City was a very tight knit organization so it wouldn't be easy for the Heavenly Dao Gate to get anything out of it. Even if the Murim Alliance made a move, it wouldn't matter since I was wearing a face mask that I was going to burn.

After getting out of the Shrouded City merchant guild I entered the nearest inn. I moved without worry since this face was no longer going to exist in this world. After getting into my room I ate one of the roots. The first root gave me three years of energy. The second root also gave me three years of energy. The efficiency of my Heavenly Protection Technique was fully displayed. However, the third root only gave me two years' worth of energy. I stopped eating the roots. From now on the efficiency of the root will decrease to two maybe one. It would be a waste to use any more.

With the three roots I was able to gain an additional eight years

worth of energy. Now I had fifty-two years' worth of energy in my dantian. I only need eight more years to reach sixty. At this rate it would take me less than a year to reach. Next year around this time I would be able to use the fourth technique of the Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art.

After packing up the three roots, I got out of the inn. I planned on giving these three to Kwang Du.

I wanted to give it to my parents but they wouldn't keep it a secret so I decided to give it him. It would have been hard to explain to them where I got it, but the bigger problem was keeping it a secret. If their son gave them a profound medicine, which parent wouldn't show it off to others. If others knew about it I would be in trouble.

'I am sorry you two, I will get you something better when I make more money'

I made Kwang Du swear that he wouldn't say anything. Either way he wouldn't know what he is eating so it wasn't going to be too much of a problem; and giving it to one person was safer than giving it to two since it was one less person to worry about.

Now the only thing that I had to take care of was the Heavenly Origin Sword. I knew a few famous blacksmiths in the Central Plains. They were worthy of being called masters, but since they were far away that wasn't an option. Also since this was one of the personal swords of the previous mengju they wouldn't keep the secret if they were threatened. So I had to disguise this myself.

I went straight to the nearest blacksmith.

Chapter 42: Heartless(1)

I paid the blacksmith some money and borrowed a small workshop. There were many occasions where Kang Ho-In borrowed a workshop. Since these Kang Ho-in asked respectfully without ripping them off, the owners usually allowed them to use the best workshop.

These workshops usually are usually three to four pyung with a furnace in the center. It had everything that a blacksmith workshop had from an anvil to hammer, tongs, casts and other materials that are found in a workshop. Upon request, the owner brought me the materials needed to forge a sword.

Since I was a person who lived by the sword there were many times where I saw the Murim Alliance's master artisan make and repair a sword. Unfortunately since I never actually used a hammer myself before, even though I may be able to imitate them, I will never be as good as them.

With a nervous heart, I took out the Heavenly Origin Sword. The blade of the sword was very sharp. All I needed was this blade. In actuality, the heavily decorated scabbard of the Heavenly Origin Sword was not to my liking. However I couldn't just walk around without a scabbard and it wasn't easy finding a scabbard that fits perfectly.

So I started with the scabbard. There were many small gems attached the sword and once they were removed from the sword they would lose their value. After removing all the gems using the Heavenly Origin Sword I started carving out the scabbard. Since

the blade was so sharp the scabbard was being carved easily. I was able to cleanly remove any formal signs of the gems and other carvings. It now looked like a new scabbard that never been decorated. I didn't stop here; I painted the scabbard black. Black was the color that was most often seen in Kang Ho. After painting, it looked like a completely different scabbard.

Isn't it a waste to damage the scabbard?

Never. Rather I felt good about it. As I said before I didn't like fancy decorations. Another reason why I didn't use the Heavenly Origin Sword for long was that it was too heavily decorated.

My personal sword that I used the most, the Divine Sword of King Shura, looked like a plain regular sword.

“Good”

I was very satisfied with my work. Even though this was my first work I was able to achieve a good result. I think I developed a knack for dealing with swords since I used them for so long.

Now, came the most important part. To change the sword itself.

The problem lay within the hilt of the sword. Just like the scabbard, not only was it heavily decorated, the hilt itself was very unique. If someone who knew the sword saw it, even without the decorations and different color they would still recognize it. So it wasn't just an issue of redecorating it.

After giving it some thought I decided to change the hilt. The moment I start this process this sword will cease to be Heavenly Origin Sword. This was because the master artisan who made this took into consideration the length and the weight of the hilt while creating this sword so the balance will be perfect. So I decided to trade off its balance for its sharp blade.

I grabbed the blade with one hand and the hilt with the other. After infusing my energy onto my hand, I gave it a strong yank. It was made so well that it would never come off unless you apply enough force to it, but it couldn't withstand my energy-infused strength.

Swooop!

The blade came out of the hilt.

“I am sorry.”

I replaced it with a decently sized premade hilt that I found lying around the workshop. To fix it in place I used the tools and supplies that they had. Anything else that was lacking I supplemented it with my energy.

Observing the master artisans in my previous life came in handy. Although it was lacking in comparison that would be exactly why this sword would not stand out.

Swoosh, Swoosh , Swoosh

I swung the sword couple of times. It didn't feel bad. If I think of it as a different blade, eventually I would get used to it.

For the final step of the process I applied some chemicals that were found within the workshop to reduce the glow of the sword. Although I wanted to make it look sharper, I was creating a masterpiece disguise. So I made the sword look duller than it was. This was just the start of the change.

I was certain, after seeing this sword no one could never believe that this was formerly the Heavenly Origin Sword. Even I couldn't believe that this was formerly the Heavenly Origin Sword.

Then I swung the sword a couple of more times.

Swoosh Swoosh

Compared to before it felt completely different. I was deeply satisfied by my work.

“Until I find your elder brother serve me well”

His elder brother as in the Divine Sword of King Shura.

After I was satisfied, I cleaned up after myself flawlessly. I tossed the original hilt and the wood carvings in the furnace and picked

up all the gems that fell off the hilt and scabbard since I thought of some uses for them.

After thanking the owner, I left the blacksmith, and took off my face-mask burned it where no one was around. The male youth who bought profound medicine and went into a blacksmith no longer existed.

“He said to rewrite the report before turning it in.” Yang Pyung, one of the advisors of True Heart sect, said while carefully returning the report.

“Alright, I will write it again.”

Since the person who received the report was Kal Sa Ryang. The person who he once worked for was now his colleague. Kal Sa Ryang had the most work while being forced to rewrite the report multiple times.

This was all due to the new chancellor Sa Ma Chun taking his revenge on Kal Sa Ryang. This was known not only to him but to everyone at the True Heart sect. Unfortunately there was nothing he could do since it would be untactful.

“He said to bring it yourself after you are done.”

“Alright, I will do so.”

“Then, I will excuse myself”

As he left Kal Sa Ryang’s desk, Yang Pyung took a deep sigh.

‘A flower doesn’t blossom forever’

(Translator Note: Chinese proverb that says nothing lasts forever especially when dealing with youth and power)

He was feeling the inhumanity and vanity of power. He really wanted to say some words of comfort and help Kal Sa Ryang in any way. But he couldn’t since he could be kicked out of the True Heart sect if he made a wrong move or said something wrong.

After finishing up the report Kal Sa Ryang went to find Sa Ma Chun.

There were a guest inside of Sa Ma Chun’s room. It were figures that he didn’t want to meet, it was Ju Cheol Ryong, the leader of the Moonlight Sect. Since he spearheaded the betrayal, Ma Bong Gi was able to become the Mengju. It was the person that Kal Sa Ryung least wanted to see.

“I didn’t know you had a visitor. I will come back later.”

Then Sa Ma Chung signaled with his hand to take a seat, “Take a seat. He will be leaving pretty soon.”

“Yes”

Kal Sa Ryang took the seat next to Ju Cheol Ryong.

Sa Ma Chun intentionally put them together since he knew about their relationship while he was enjoying this.

“Since you haven’t seen each other, why don’t you take some time to greet each other?”

Kal Sa Ryang respectfully greeted Ju Cheol Ryong, “It’s been a while”

Ju Cheol Ryong only nodded. No one knew except for him whether he felt apologetic toward him or whether he didn’t want to talk to him since he was no longer the Chancellor.

But Kal Sa Ryang didn’t show any sign of being upset. He too was very headstrong.

Sa Ma Chun was enjoying this from his chair since his intention was to disturb Kal Sa Ryang the best he could. He gave Kal Sa Ryang the most amount of work and he returned most of Kal Sa Ryang’s reports. If he wanted to bring down Kal Sa Ryang the first thing he had to do was to break him mentally. Sa Ma Chun believed that if he kept pestering him he would eventually break down. No matter how strong one may be they would eventually give in.

‘Undaunted Spirit?’

Sa Ma Chun was laughing aloud. There was only one person that he knew who had this and it was Chun Ha Jin.

Yes, whether it be in martial arts or in ruling the Kang Ho with an iron fist he had an undaunted spirit. However, he was no longer in this world. With him the undaunted spirit also died.

Ju Cheol Ryong said his greeting, “I will be off now.”

“Thank you for coming here in your busy time”

As he was leaving he didn’t give Kal Sa Ryang a single glance.

Kal Sa Ryang turned his attention to Sa Ma Chun and handed in the report.

“Here is the report that I rewrote.”

“Place it over there”

And Kal Sa Ryang placed it on top of the desk. Beside it there were other reports that he had sent up. One could tell that they weren’t even opened, but Kal Sa Ryang simply placed it on top of that stack.

“Then, I will excuse myself.”

As he was about to leave Sa Ma Chun asked, “Ah, I have something to ask you.”

“Yes, please tell me”

“I checked it personally but one of the previous Mengju’s swords’ is missing.”

“Which sword are you talking about?”

“The Divine Sword of King Shura.”

“And it wasn’t inside the Weapon Hall of the Alliance?”

“No it wasn’t.”

“Then I do not know. During his last years the Mengju-nim never touched a sword. So I believe it should be somewhere in the Weapon Hall. If it is not in there then Mengju-nim probably put it somewhere else.”

“I see. Alright. you can leave now”

“Yes”

After bowing Kal Sa Ryang left the room. With a cold stare he was staring at Kal Sa Ryang.

Then he said to the air, “You are observing every move that he makes right?”

Then a shadow from the ceiling replied, “Yes”

“Just in case he might have hidden the sword. Find the place where he might have hidden it.”

“Yes.”

After giving the order Sa Ma Chun sat down on a chair, “If even you don’t know then where did that sword go?”

“Give me a drink here”

There was a middle aged man and a younger man sitting down at one of the table.

Baek Pyo greeted them.

“Welcome back.”

These two group of travelers came here two or three times to get drink some wine.

“This time I went all the from Gamsu.”

“Oh really, It must have been a long trip. I will prepare the appetizers that you always get”

After giving them the alcohol Baek Pyo started cooking.

And the two people started talking.

“This is what I felt from my recent travel to Gamsu. But there is a weird wind blowing from in the city.”

“What weird wind”

“This is what I heard...”

Although there was no other customer the man lowered his voice. This showed how dangerous this news might have been.

“They said Ma Song In of the Heavenly Dao gate bought one the merchant guilds of Gamsu.”

“Isnt Ma Song In one of the successors of the Heavenly Dao Gate?

“Yeah. The Ma Song In. One of the Six successor.”

“I wonder what this about?”

It looked as if he had something else he knew about but he didn't say it. Although Baek Pyo pretended he didn't hear there were many rumors about the Heavenly Dao Gate these days.

Not only in Gamsu but in other areas the descendants of the Heavenly Dao Gates were also spreading their influences.

This was something that he could never think about when he was serving the previous Mengju. Chun Ha Jin really hated the foreign powers influencing the different areas of Kang Ho. Although Chun Ha Jin didn't have a family, if he did he would have regulated them.

Then the man asked while looking at the wall, “But was that always there?”

On top of the kitchen entrance there was a wooden decoration. The wooden decoration was a round shield with an axe and a sword making a cross. It looked as if it was from a hunter's shop.

“No, after I took over I put it there since the walls looked empty.”

“So you carved it yourself?”

“Yes, I do it to waste time.”

“You have a very good handicraft.”

“I am still lacking.”

Baek Pyo looked at the decoration on the wall.

He naturally remembered. After giving him an opening present Kal Sa Ryang secretly came back a few days later. This was even before Ma Bong Gi or Sa Ma Chun were appointed. Kal Sa Ryang gave him a sword. Surprisingly this was the personal sword of the previous Mengju, the Divine Sword of King Shura.

“I am entrusting this sword with you”

“I don’t think I will be able to guard it for you”

“You are the only person I trust. I will be under watchful eyes after the new Mengju gets appointed. So I will not have much opportunity to visit you.

“Chancellor Kal”

“Please take care of this sword”

“What do you plan to do with this sword?”

“I don’t know yet. I could give everything else but I will never give them this.”

Baek Pyo understood how he felt. He would remember Chun Ha Jin just by looking at this sword.

Baek Pyo nodded, “Alright. I will safeguard it.”

“Thank you”

Hearing the words of his customer Baek Pyo woke up from his thoughts.

“You are drinking a lot today.”

“I will drink till I drop dead”

“Hahaha. That’s good for me. If you drink till you drop dead then I can make more money.”

“Good! This is why I like this restaurant. Ha Ha Ha”

The two traveler took their attention off the decoration on the wall.

Chapter 43: Heartless (2)

Song Hwa Rin was sitting next to a mirror. Compared to the first day her swelling reduced a lot but her face was still swollen. This was a new experience for her. How can someone look so different when they are swollen?

From behind her Soo Ran said, “How can you smile right now?”

“Huh?”

It seemed like she was smiling without noticing.

“We are not kids anymore, I can’t cry just because I was beaten up.”

“I can’t forgive young master Byuk.”

“Really now?”

“Milady! Don’t say it as if it doesn’t concern you. This was a major event.”

“I don’t plan to bear a grudge against him because of this.”

Ever since that day Song Hwa Rin replayed that fight multiple times every day.

“Ever since I was little I learned martial arts and there were many times when I had an exchange of pointers. But this exchange of pointers was something else. This was, how should I say...”

Felt real. This felt like real fighting, no, it felt more real than actual fights.

“He is stronger than me. And by a lot.”

“He was just lucky.”

She just said that because she was sad, but she knew as well since she saw the fight that Byuk Lee Dan’s martial art was much stronger. He was stronger than her, and he was stronger than Song Hwa Rin.

“Do you know what I was thinking when I was lying on the floor?”

“What thoughts did you have?”

“Relief.”

Soo Ran said in a surprised tone, “What? You felt relieved? But why?”

“It felt as if the congestion in my chest was released. Do you

understand how that feels? Imagine you have to do something but it doesn't go so well. So you don't want to do it anymore since it is a bother. But time keeps on ticking while you procrastinate. Then that day it felt like all those feelings were released and I felt refreshed. Like the feeling when you come out of a bath after you haven't taken a bath in a month."

"Oh my god! After being beaten up like that... I really don't understand you."

Then Song Hwa Rin made a smile. 'Yes, I didn't understand either...'

First she thought that the refreshing feeling was due to figuring out the flaw in her sword art. But then as the time went on she could tell that wasn't the reason.

She remembered the words Byuk Lee Dan said before.

"There are times when you just have to accept it so that you can move on."

That day she replied she couldn't do it. She believed she could never change.

She looked at the mirror.

Her face was all swollen.

Maybe she was seeing a change through the mirror. If it was just like any other day she would have gotten mad like Soo Ran, but today she might be happy due to the change in her heart. The ‘change’ that she had been hoping for a long time.

Song Hwa Rin slowly walked to the window and almost stumbled. Soo Ran rushed to support her but Song Hwa Rin waved her off. With her own strength, she got to the window and opened it wide.

The hot summer weather was now gone and autumn winds were slowly blowing.

“The wind feels really nice.”

Kwang Du finally returned.

Rather than his normal expression he had a heavy and serious expression. I could tell that the reason for this was because of his rage.

“Just as you told me Ma Jung Soo bought a plot of land in Jae Nam for his Martial Arts School.

Since the contracts are already signed they will start construction soon.”

Kwang Du was able to find out everything starting from the exact location, size, number of equipment needed for the construction, all the way to the number of workers that will be working on this.

But the reason why Kwang Du was angry was because of this.

“But Ma Jung Soo bought that land dirt cheap.”

“For how much?”

“He bought it for almost nothing.”

“The owner would have resisted in selling it.”

“Yes. Originally the owner didn’t want to sell it. But...”

Kwang Du made an angry face and said, “A couple of days after the contract there was an accident and the owner’s youngest daughter died.”

“An accident?”

“The house caught on fire...”

Just thinking about it made Kwang Du pause for a moment. With a stern face I waited for Kwang Du’s next words.

“Not only that. The next day the eldest son was heavily injured due to a horse riding incident. And the owner’s old mother dropped dead because she ate something. It seemed the financial manager who declined the deal was stabbed to death. The Murim Alliance was contacted but it seemed as though they couldn’t find any evidence of a conspiracy. So in the end the owner sold the land, and left Jae Nam with his family.”

Kwang Du had tightened his fist and his hand was shaking, “How could they do this?”

All the accidents that Kwang Du told me must have been intended. He was right. How can this have happened by fate?

Although my heart was already cold, but I didn’t show that anger.

“Did Ma Jung Soo sign the contract himself?”

“No. The person who signed the contract was someone called Old Man Flower Fan.

You heartless old man! I had a feeling about what took place here. He was an outsider. To receive the trust of Ma Jung Soo he must render some merit. To retain his trust and power, Old Man Flower Fan did something this inhumane.

“I was boiling all the way to my head but on the other hand I am

really afraid. How can someone do something like this?”

“Because he is not a human being. How can someone like him be considered a human being.”

“Young master! Please punish him. Punish him. Since I am too weak I am asking you.”

There was truth in his eyes. After meeting Kwang Du there were many instances like this but this time he was really angry. He was more angry than when he was humiliated.

“I will.”

These short words. They were more effective than a hundred words.

And he understood the meaning behind my sentence and said, “Thank you, young master.”

He was growing, he was becoming more and more like a real Kang Ho-In.

Yes, rage at them. You must realize why we strengthen ourselves. So that we can bring justice upon these evil people.

“I realized it this time. If you are weak you can’t do anything. I hate the fact that I can’t do anything.”

“Then I will help you ease some of that helplessness away.”

“What?”

I took out a wooden box.

“Open it”

“What is it?”

Kwang Du opened the box. The content inside the box were three roots of thorowax.

“What are these roots?”

“In Kang Ho it is called cultivating medicine?”

“Eh?! This is cultivating medicine? Kwang Du was surprised and his hands were trembling.

“Their quality isn’t the best. It a lower tier profound medicine.”

“But it still expensive, right?”

“Of course they are expensive.”

“How much?”

I truthfully reported their price to Kwang Du. After hearing that each root costed nine thousand nyang...

“Oh my! They are very expensive! Where did you find these? I will enter a mountain and look for more. It guess it’s now time to show off my horse-riding skills”

I laughed. I remembered him coming back home riding a horse casually.

“It is not something that anyone can find just because they enter a mountain. If not then the price wouldn’t be as expensive.”

“I guess. But then these?”

“Yes, I bought them for you. Eat them.”

“Really?”

“Then do you think I showed them to you to show off or something?”

Kwang Du flinched.

“No you can’t! You can’t do that! You must eat them young master. You can’t give them to me”

Kwang Du became stiff again. This was just like the time when I said we were going to share a room.

He is probably like this since eating and sleeping is a basic human necessity.

“I am alright. If I eat this twenty seven thousand worth of nyang then my tongue will melt away.”

“I already ate. I bought them for you.”

“Then eat some more.”

“I cant eat anymore.”

“What?”

“They are just like food. Even if it is good food if you eat too much of it you will get sick. That is how it is for cultivating medicine.”

Even though it wasn’t literal, it had a similar meaning.

“Then give it to Gaju-nim and Madam.”

“I have something for them already so don’t worry about them.”

“But this expensive thing... I don’t know where you got it from but sell it”

“I can’t sell it. So hurry up and eat it”

“Young master”

Kwang Du took a breath in and kept hesitating. He questioned me multiple times.

Since the time he started cultivating he would already know. How precious these profound medicines are and how much they can help you. Even though he knows about it he is still resisting. Even though he really wants to eat it. And because he is like this it is never a waste.

Kwang Du looked at me dead in the eyes. He asked me if he could eat this with his eyes and I nodded.

“Fine, I will eat it. I will eat it and become more loyal to you.”

“Alright. Then become loyal until you die.”

Kwang Du sat down after grabbing the contents of the box.

“How should I eat these?”

“You can just chew them and swallow them. After eating them you will feel hot energy inside your body. Use the cultivating technique that I taught you to absorb that energy.”

“Can I do it?”

“I will help you so don’t worry.”

“Then... alright. Do I eat all of them at the same time? Or do I eat them one at a time while using the technique.”

“Just eat them all.”

“Yes.”

If I wasn’t here eating one at a time would be safer since there was a possibility that he could fail.

But since I was beside him helping him absorb them, it was going to be fine if he ate all three of them.

He ate all three roots.

Once those three roots entered his stomach I told him, “Now

activate your cultivating technique.”

He activated his cultivating technique.

I sent my energy inside him and searched his body.

“Slowly, calmly.”

After activating his cultivating technique he started absorbing the energy of the roots. And the energy that I sent inside him helped him absorb it much easier.

Since Kwang Du trained diligently, and was more intelligent than others he was able follow my guide.

WOooooohhh!!!

He was able to absorb most of the energy.

“Now, slowly circulate it throughout your body.”

He followed my instructions carefully and circulated the energy throughout his body.

After around four cycles he opened his eyes, “Is it over?”

I nodded my head. He made an expression as if he couldn't

believe it, 'how could it be this simple'. Then his expression changed to that of worry.

“Did it go well?”

I gave a sigh and made a regretful expression.

Then he said in a sign of relief, “So it went well.”

“Why do you think that?”

“Because if it didn't go well then you wouldn't make a serious expression. You would smile to comfort me.”

This punk, he knows me too well.

I said with a smile, “Yes you are right. It went well. Go and check you dantian.”

Kwang Du closed his eyes and felt his dantian.

After some time Kwang Du opened his eyes and exclaimed, “There is so much energy in it.”

“Haha, It's not that much. How much do you have?”

“I don't really know how much.”

“Yeah you wouldn’t know.”

I placed my hand over his dantian.

There were eight years of energy in his dantian. The total energy given off from the roots were three years, three years, and two years. If he did this by himself he would at most get five years of energy. Since I helped him he was able to get three more years.

“You gained eight years worth of energy from it.”

“Oh my! Eight years? Really? Are you for real? You are not going to say ‘oh I was wrong it was only eight days’ right? Hahahaha.”

Kwang Du was truly happy.

I knew how he felt When I first learned martial arts, it was the feeling that you get after making a major breakthrough one step at a time.

“Thank you young master. Thank you very much!”

“You must be more careful now. Even though it’s only eight years if you use your techniques it will be incomparable to before. The people who would get hurt are now going to get killed.”

“I will be careful, especially careful.”

I told him if anyone asks to tell them that he met an expert on a mountain and that old expert gave him this.

Even without any energy, with the Seven Stance of the Northern Sea Kwang Du was able to kill four bandits, but now with eight years of energy backing him up, in the Small Sword Sect even the Main Sect's Seo Jung wouldn't be able to deal with Kwang Du.

With trembling voice Kwang Du asked, "I know it seems obvious but, does having more energy make you stronger?"

"You could say that in a way it does. But just because you have twice the energy doesn't mean you will get twice as strong."

"Then?"

"The internal energy is a major factor influencing your techniques. But just because of that it doesn't mean everything is dependent on this. You will be able to use more techniques if you have more energy. And you will even be able to use more advanced techniques. But there is also other factors like stamina, concentration, and experience."

"Then we can say it allows you to fight longer."

"Yeah. The more energy that you have the more techniques you can use."

“Ah, I understand. But young master, why did you make me eat this?”

“That is...”

“Because you favor me?”

I jokingly said “No. because I was full.”

He said jokingly, “Not because you want to throw me in front of you when you are in danger?”

“There could be times when that happens.”

“So in other words I am a meat shield.”

“In Kang Ho terms it is sword fodder. Haha.”

As he was pouting, I told him, “Don’t worry I will make you into the invincible sword fodder. A sword fodder who will bring down even experts. For me, and for you.”

With that Kwang Du smiled and said, “I will try my hardest.”

It was worth it to raise and nurture Kwang Du.

I remember the time when the instructor at the Murim Alliance

said something like this. The more it is worth nurturing that person the more they will grow. I think he was talking about someone like Kwang Du.

And Kwang Du, I will keep my promise.

Now which one of Ma Jung Soo's wing should I break first?

Old Man Flower Fan.

This greedy old fart. He does something inhumane just to feed his greed.

Kwang Du-Ya, just you watch. How I take care of this.

Chapter 44: Heartless (3)

I met up with the Yang Clan's Bangju, Jung Yeo.

He was pleased with my success at stealing the treasure vault.

"I knew that Byuk Kongja would be able to succeed."

It doesn't seem like he's too surprised, but rather as if he expected this.

"It's all thanks to you, Bangju-nim."

"What did I do? It was your achievement."

"If you hadn't told me the location of the secret corridor, how could I have gotten there before Si Gon? It's all thanks to you."

He smiled when I thanked him. I'd said thank you from the bottom of my heart. If it weren't for his help, I wouldn't have even gotten close to the vault.

"Don't they suspect you?"

"Thankfully they don't."

They didn't believe that we'd challenge one of the five great

clans of the Central Plain, as they just considered us country bumpkin. This was probably because none of the border clans had been able to do so until now.

“Where are they now?”

“I think they’re trying to bring the San Dong Merchant Guild to their side.”

It was the same San Dong Merchant Guild that had failed to bring the Song Clan to their side.

Since the San Dong Merchant Guild needed strength, and Ma Jung Soo needed money, you could say that they would form an exquisite corporation.

“So they’re planning to use the San Dong Merchants to solve their money problems.”

“Yes; maybe this could be an opportunity to get more money.”

My mouth curved upwards.

“Why are you smiling?”

“Of course because it’s the perfect opportunity to make more money.”

He chuckled nervously.

He might have taken it as a joke, but I'd said it truthfully.

Since I've already stuck my straw into them, I might as well suck them dry.

Moreover, the San Dong Merchants were already on my bad side. They were about to use the Song Clan to get out of their trouble too. I would've eventually extinguished them, but it seems that I'll have to take care of them a bit sooner since they're associating with Ma Jung Soo.

"I've already told the information guild to keep an eye on the San Dong Merchants. I'll let you know when I receive any news."

"Thanks."

Jung Yeo was showing his loyalty to me. Thanks to me, he'd been able to become the Bangju; the loyalty he was showing seemed aggressive and very large. Just this heist alone could cause him to lose his head—if anything went wrong.

I presumed it was about time. "Jung Bangju."

"Yes."

"You said that your dream was raising the Yang Clan?"

“Yes, it is.”

“Have you found a greater dream?”

He grew silent. He knew what my question meant. ‘Do you want to achieve this grand dream with me?’

“Do you trust me?”

His voice was trembling. He already knew that my previous question would change his life forever.

“I don’t know.”

“Then why did you bring it up?”

“Because you’re someone that I want to trust.”

In my previous life, I hadn’t trusted just anyone. I’d build up trust through a rigorous process of questioning and testing. However, that kind of trust was very dry. As if waiting for my death, they’d turned their backs on me.

Now that I think about it, our relationship hadn’t been built upon trust; it had been built upon fear. Fear that either their lives or careers would end if they did something wrong. It had been their fear of such things that had kept this relationship. That

twenty year relationship that I'd had with them couldn't even be compared to the less-than-a-year relationship I had with Jung Yeo. Thus, in this life, I wanted to change my way of making relationships with others. Not through trial and questioning, but through following my instincts.

“Someone that you want to trust... it seems that your thoughts are similar to mine.”

He said truthfully. He also seemed to hold similar thoughts.

If he'd told me that he trusted me, I would've been disappointed. I should never make the mistake of keeping him too close simply because he'd helped me, nor should I ever make the mistake of keeping him at a distance because he'd refused my proposal.

“You said this before. Even though I'm not the best person, I'm not someone that forgets favors.”

“Yes, I said that.”

“I am not you to be a great person.”

Since I have someone like that by my side already.

“I need someone who can carry their weight without betraying me.”

Although he might not like what I'd just said, these were my true feelings.

"I'll start building my trust of you for from here on."

After staring at me in silence, he said, "Give me a moment to think."

"Of course. I don't mind if it takes months or years. Think deeply about it."

"Thank you."

Jung Yeo left the room after bowing.

I was able to hear him enter his room next door. This was the current distance that he gave me. How this distance will change will depend on his decision.

To eliminate Old Man Flower Fan, I had to first find someone.

Based on what Kwang Du had said, Old Man had been at a place where he could prove his alibi during all the accidents that took place in Jae Nam. This meant that there was someone working for him. Of course, it wasn't his style to personally do things.

There must be someone acting as his hands and feet.

Since he'd come together with Ma Jung Soo, it's highly unlikely that he would bring such a person with him, which means that that person was somewhere nearby, receiving orders.

I needed to find that person. After I find him or her, I need to confirm, from that person's mouth, that he or she did so under Old Man Flower Fan's order. I can't just kill that person based on an assumption.

I bought another face-mask and applied it. I couldn't use the face that I'd used to get inside of the Yang Clan Manor. This time I bought a high-tier mask, as I was going to be using it multiple times.

Since face-masks are sold in a well-sealed package, not even the sellers knew what it looks like, much less the buyers. However the buyers could still choose the gender and age.

This time that face that I bought was that of a thirty-some years old male. You could also choose a face with some added features on the mask, such as a scar or burn marks for some extra nyang.

Before, you'd have to have a professional mask-maker make one for you, but now it had become much easier. The quality wasn't too bad either. With high-tier masks, you couldn't even tell when someone was wearing a mask.

I proceeded to observe Old Man Flower Fan from a distance with a new face. Since his martial arts weren't ordinary, trailing him wasn't easy. I didn't have that much experience trailing someone either, so I had to simply observe where he went from a distance.

Old Man Flower Fan was truly a busy and calculating person. He woke up early in the morning, went on a walk in a nearby forest, had breakfast, had tea in his garden, all before finally starting his day. He busily went place to place. Most of the time he went somewhere to meet someone. Thinking that all these meetings were part of the process that he'd gone through to do what he did in Jae Nam gave me goosebumps.

On the fourth day, I finally caught wind of something. I figured out that he was meeting someone when he entered the forest in the morning. When he entered the forest for a walk, I didn't follow him and observed from outside. I stayed and watched the forest a bit longer, before noticing a man leave from somewhere in the forest. The next day, and the one after, this man would leave a certain amount of time after Old Man Flower Fan had left. I determined that this was too precise to be a coincidence.

Five days after observing the forest, I entered the forest right after Old Man Flower Fan had left.

Swoooooosh.

The sound of the wind blowing past the bamboo trees sounded like water flowing in a river, which

calmed my heart. I hastened my pace.

How far had he walked? I saw the man walking my way from the end of the road.

I casually changed my pace as if I were on a stroll as the man casually walked towards me.

The moment we walked past each other...

Shiiing.

The man drew his sword and swung it towards my neck.

Quick steps, quick draw... this man was an expert. However, unfortunately for him, I was well prepared for anything that he threw at me.

Grab!

The sword stopped at my neck. That was because I'd grabbed his arm. I was able to tell what kind of person he was since he'd drawn his blade without a second thought.

I didn't hesitate to break his arm. He tried to hold on using his energy, but I overwhelmed him.

Crack!

His arm snapped like a twig.

“Ahhhhh!!!”

He cried out in agony and dropped his sword, before suddenly using his other hand to aim for my eyes.

I quickly broke his other arm.

Crack!

“Uahhhh!”

Another cry was heard from him. He didn't have any chances left.

Smack! Smack! Smack!

My fist found its mark on his chest and ribs, causing him to fall down.

“Uaahhhh...”

You could hear his pain from his cry, as my last couple of hits had broken some of his ribs. I purposely didn't break any that would

threaten his life.

He looked at me with a pained expression. "...Who are you?"

"I'm someone that you tried to kill without even knowing who I was."

He had good senses—I could tell from the way that he'd tried to kill me. Most would try to preserve their life in this situation. If he was like them, I'd have an easy time dealing with him.

"Do you want to live?"

He was hesitant.

Shiiing!

I drew my sword and swung it towards him. Just as I was about to strike him, he spoke, "I want to live."

I coldly stared at him. "Did Old Man Flower Fan order you to cause that accident in Jae Nam?"

His eyes trembled. He was afraid that he was going to die at the hands of Old Man Flower Fan if he told me anything, but his body had told me the answer.

Since he was so hesitant, I brought down my blade.

“Wait!”

Stab!

My sword stabbed into his shoulder and blood began to gush out of his shoulder. If I hadn't stopped, he would've died from being cut down through his shoulder.

He finally understood what I wanted.

“The person that I want is Old Man Flower Fan. Do you think that he's someone who'll put his neck out for someone like you? If you think so, then you don't have to answer.”

He didn't hesitate. He knew what kind of person Old Man Flower Fan was.

“Everything was orchestrated by Old Man Flower Fan.”

I took out the blade stuck inside of his shoulder and poked some pressure points to stop the bleeding. I put away my blade as well.

Since I acted as if I was going to let him live, he opened his mouth and told me the truth.

“He never told me to kill anyone, but he said to do anything to get the land.”

This clever old fart; he never directly ordered someone to kill, but his order to do anything necessary to get the land was equivalent to an order to kill.

“Do you meet Old Man Flower Fan here every day?”

“Yes.”

The hardest part was getting him to say something, but after that, he sung like a bird. He told me everything that I wanted to know.

“What did you tell him today?”

“There’s a female that came here with us. I’m currently investigating her.”

This was information that I needed to hear about.

“Aren’t you on the same side?”

“Yes. She’s someone that the Mengju, Ma Bong GI, sent.”

“Do you know why she came?”

“It seems like she’s here to observe Ma Jung Soo, but that hasn’t been confirmed yet.”

“And is there anything else you’ve found out about her?”

“No. I looked around in multiple places, but there wasn’t any information regarding her.”

“What does she usually do?”

“There are days when she walks around the Yang House, while there are other days where she simply disappears. It’s hard to know when she’ll disappear, and it’s hard to trace her.”

The most dangerous person on their side was definitely this women.

In Kang Ho, the scariest opponents aren’t those who are stronger than you, but the ones that you don’t know anything about.

“Are you going to meet Old Man Flower Fan here tomorrow as well?”

“Yes.”

“Is there any special form of communication? Like a secret code?”

“No. If you go further in, there’s a small rock. He’ll come to that place if you wait for him.”

“Alright.”

“Then I should—”

Without him expecting anything, I sent my palm towards his forehead

Smack!

His skull broke from my strike; he died without even letting out a sound.

He must’ve been regretful, considering that he’d believed that I’d let him live. But I’d never even thought of letting him live. I was just keeping him alive to verify if Old Man Flower Fan was the mastermind behind this event.

He deserved to die.

It didn’t matter if he was under orders or not; for him to use martial arts to steal someone’s property, and to kill someone—a child and an elderly one, at that. This was something unforgivable.

Looking at his corpse, I said, “Don’t worry, I’ll allow you to meet

your master tomorrow.”

The scenery that you’ll soon see won’t be as beautiful as these pine trees, but a place filled with fire and demons.

I’ll send you all there—one by one.

Chapter 45: Heartless (4)

Surprised by the news that Song Hwa Rin visited their house, Im Ae Hwa rushed to the guest house.

At the guest house, Song Hwa Rin was there waiting.

“Rin-Ah! Why are you here?”

“Have you been well?”

“I am sorry, but Dan-ee is not home today.”

“I came to see you today, mother.”

“Me? Why me? Let’s sit down and talk.”

The two people sat across each other and the maids brought out some tea.

Im Ae Hwa stared at Song Hwa Rin’s face in silence. She still had signs of swelling.

“I am sorry.”

“No. Rather, I should be the one apologizing.”

“You?”

“I am sorry for making all of you worried because of our problems. I am truly sorry.”

Im Ae Hwa was a bit puzzled by this situation. Aside from liking Song Hwa Rin and wanting to make her their daughter-in-law, she knew that Song Hwa Rin had a feisty attitude. For her to visit their house like this was a bit different than norm. Nonetheless Im Ae Hwe just wanted the two of them do be happy.

She thought there was might have been some sort of misunderstanding when Song Hwa Rin came over just to visit her.

“Did something happen?”

Song Hwa Rin smiled and answered, “Dan-ee said something like this. ‘I grew up after getting beaten up by you.’ Now, after getting beaten up by him I think I grew up a bit”

“Hahaha”

Im Ae Hwa was smiling happily. Im Ae Hwe was able to tell what kind of changes Song Hwa Rin was experiencing.

To be honest, Song Hwa Rin hesitated many times before coming here. She even thought about going back when she arrived at their door, but she didn’t. Aside from the divorce situation with Byuk Lee Dan, she wanted to tell Im Ae Hwe that she was doing fine.

This was because she was worried her mother-in-law was worrying about her.

“Rin-Ah”

“Yes”

Im Ae Hwa said, “You can do things slowly. See everything that you want to see, do everything that you want to do. And there are bound to be times when you go down a wrong path. But it’s alright.”

Since that was a privilege only the youth have.

She was reminiscent of her youth; her youth that had flown past her as fast as a throwing knife. Back then, even when someone had given her advice such as to ‘slow down’, she’d still been in a hurry. She’d been in a hurry to get older. She wanted to know what awaited her as she got older.

Seeing the eyes of Im Ae Hwa grow brighter, Song Hwa Rin said calmly, “Can I visit you occasionally?”

Im Ae Hwa leaned into her ear and whispered, “You can live in our house starting today if you want.”

Im Ae Hwa laughed as Song Hwa Rin got quiet and her face grew brighter.

Song Hwa Rin thought it was a good day to visit. Even though she was thinking of Byuk Lee Dan, she quickly put that thought aside.

“Should we have another cup of tea?”

With a better mood Song Hwa Rin answered with a smile, “Yes!”

The next morning, Old Man Flower Fan walked into the forest.

It looked as though he was casually enjoying his morning walk but he arrived at the meeting point at the same time as yesterday.

The man who he usually met had his back turned looking into the forest.

Old Man Flower Fan approached him and asked, “What are you staring at?”

It was the moment when he took couple of more steps.

That moment the Old Man Flower Fan froze in place feeling threatened.

Swooosh!

The man who had his back turned threw couple of throwing knives.

Old Man Flower Fan tilted his body to dodge those attacks. But he had no room to breathe after dodging the throwing knives because I slashed my blade as fast as speed of light.

Shiiing!

The Heavenly Origin Sword cut through the air, aimed at his heart.

Clangg!

Old man Flower Fan quickly deflected my sword with his fan. The effectiveness of his fan that was enhanced with his ki was put on full display. His prowess showed with this single clash how, with his fan alone, he'd been able to withstand multiple assassination attempts.

Most people's blades would've been broken by this, but if they were a bit stronger than average they would've let go of their blade, and if they were stronger than that they would've missed their mark completely.

But I, as well as my blade, shouldn't be compared to others.

Even though my blade had missed its intended target, it still buried itself inside of his body.

Stab!

Old Man Flower Fans's shoulder was split open and blood gushed out.

Step, Step, Step.

Without even checking the status of his shoulder, he swung his fan around and quickly retreated a couple of steps.

Others would have used this opportunity to pressure him but I didn't.

He may have looked like he was just aimlessly retreating, but I'd seen his footwork clearly.

This was a trap.

By pretending that he was in danger, it was his ploy to bait his enemy.

If he was given the chance, he could have turned the situation around.

A dozen steps away, Old Man Flower Fan stopped his bleeding by pressing the pressure points around the wound.

“Who are you?”

“Have you forgotten already? We just met yesterday. Don’t we usually meet here?”

Although I was wearing the clothes of the man that I killed, I’d expected him to figure something out.

All I’d wanted was enough distance between us that I could surprise him. Luckily, I’d been successful with my attack and had managed to stab his shoulder.

I was confident enough to face him head on, but there was no need to do something so dangerous. He wasn’t someone worthy enough for me to fight head on. It would’ve been best if I had ended his life with my previous attack, but I couldn’t.

“He must have died.”

“So will you,”

I wanted to keep him alive a bit longer so that I could question him, but I pressed my attack.

In a battle between high-level experts, the most important things

were gaining the advantage. If you lose the advantage you'll be pressured and be on defense until you lose.

I started pressuring him; I wasn't too quick nor too rash with my attacks. The best way to gain the advantage was to chain your attacks into a flawless set so that it will make force your enemy into blocking all of them and raise the pressure.

With every clash between us, sparks of ki flew out.

If it was an ordinary steel fan, even when infused with ki it still would have been ripped to shreds under the attack of the Heavenly Origin Sword. However, his fan wasn't ordinary. The reason that Old Man Flower Fan had been able to survive for so long was because of his weapon as well as the amount of ki he'd accumulated during his life.

Old Man Flower Fan could be considered one level below Si Gon, but this was only taking into consideration head-to-head fights. In situations which called for surprise attacks, Old Man Flower Fan might be one step ahead of Si Gon. The reason why I hated old experts was because I knew fully well how dangerous they were.

If they showed even the slightest opening you must be prepared for death.

Why?

Because by them showing their opening, it was equivalent to you showing your opening.

No matter how much pressure he was put under, he was still a worthy opponent.

Flap!

The sound of him repeatedly opening and closing his fan was heard. Each time we clashed, Old Man Flower Fan revealed a few of his techniques. However, after some time, his face darkened. He knew that he was losing this battle slowly.

Slash!

This time I was able to cut his arm and blood spilled everywhere. It might have looked like a deep wound, but I knew that it was a light wound.

But this injury shook Old Man Flower Fan's concentration since he was injured while he was on the defense.

Flaappppp!!!

Through his fan, the Old Man Flower Fan released his killing intent. It was his hidden trump card.

From his fan, few throwing knives barely grazed my face. And

the price for missing his target was severe.

Slash!!!

My sword cut off his hand.

“AHHHHH!!!”

This was the first time that he screamed.

He was now in a defenseless state since his fan was on the ground along with his hand.

Slash!!!

I cut into his side.

“Kuuaahhh!!!”

After crying out in pain, Old Man Flower Fan stumbled and fell down. This victor was decided.

“Please! Please Wait!”

He was grabbing onto his wrist. However blood was already flowing through his hand and his side, dying his clothes scarlet.

He should have waited for a better opportunity to use his trump card, but he chose to use it too soon. There was bound to be an opening after using a big attack. This was why I'd held back from using my Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art.

“...Let me live. If you let me live I'll do anything. Who hired you? I'll pay twice, no, five-times that. I will pay you five-times and if you kill the person who hired you I will give you ten-times the original amount. I can promise you this.”

Hearing his offers, I calmly replied.

“You have such a strong desire to live even though you are so old.”

“You can say anything you want. But I don't want to die.”

“Have you even asked who hired me?”

“Who is it?”

“The person who hired me is already dead. You killed them already; back in Jae Nam.”

Old Man Flower Fan made a strange expression when he heard this.

Stab!

I stabbed him in the chest.

“This is revenge for the child that you killed.”

The moment I twisted my sword, Old Man Flower Fan cried in pain.

Then I quickly withdrew the weapon and stabbed him on the other side of his chest.

“And this is revenge for the parents.”

I twisted my blade, and he screamed for mercy.

But he still couldn't let go of his desire to live.

“Please.... let me live.”

“Is your old life so valuable? To kill even little children, you wanted power that much?”

“...I will live a good life from now on. So please...”

I took out the blade from his chest.

I turned around and walked away.

After ten or so steps I turned around and looked at him.

He struggled to get up. He was bowing his head since he believed I was letting him live.

“...Thank you. I will... never forget... this grace that you have shown me.”

He would've never expected my next response.

“Didn't I tell you that if you live like that it will not end well? I warned you to live your life in silence.”

He looked befuddled. Was it because it was his last moment? Or was it because he took my last response to heart?

He remembered when, and who said this before. He remembered hearing it a long time ago, from the Mengju, when he'd been denied a position as a physician for the Murim Alliance.

“That's something that Chun Ha Jin said to me. But how do you know that?”

When he had this, his eyes were wide open. However, my sword raced towards him.

Shiinnng!!!

Boooooomm!!!

After the usage of my sword stance, the area around Old Man Flower Fan exploded

This was the third technique of Asura Soul Chasing Sword Art, the Nothingness Sword Stance.

Old Ma Flower Fan was blown into pieces and scattered everywhere.

Drop! Drop! Drop!

Pieces of distorted flesh fell down, along with dirt and rocks.

The area itself had been blown away.

Drop!

A piece of shattered metal fell below my foot. This was Old Man Flower Fan's fan. It disappeared from the world along with its master.

“Rest in hell.”

After coldly saying these words, I turned around. Through the giant pine trees, the clear sky could be seen.

Somewhere far up there a child must be sleeping peacefully in her grandmother's arms.

‘Child, I wish you happiness In your next life.’

“Old Man Flower Fan, who left yesterday, still hasn't come back.”

Ma Jung Soo was surprised at this unexpected news from Si Gon. This had never happened before. He knew well that Old Man Flower Fan was person who followed a routine. He usually never deviated from his routine.

“Have you looked around?”

“We sent some men to find him...but he couldn't be found.”

“He must've had some sudden appointments.”

Ma Jung Soo paused for a moment.

“Could he have...?”

Si Gon who was thinking the same thing with a strange look on his face.

Ma Jung Soo quickly got out of his seat.

“Let’s go to his room.”

The two people quickly entered the Old Man Flower Fan’s room.

They searched his closet and wardrobe. However, all of Old Man Flower Fan’s belongings were gone.

After receiving the order from Byuk Lee Dan, Jung Yeo had taken care of it.

“He already left!”

After staring blankly for a while Ma Jung Soo screamed, “That son of a! The one who stole from the vault was that old weasel!”

“That’s what it looks like.”

Si Gon didn’t say any alternative possibility, as he’d been humiliated by Old Man Flower Fan. Since the evidence was clear, why would he risk his life defending the old traitor? Instead, he started looking for evidence to prove it.

In contrast, Ma Jung So was in a state of doubt. He didn't believe that someone like Old Man

Flower Fan would risk his life for a couple of Nyangs.

Si Gon suddenly yelled, "Look here!"

He moved one of the tables to reveal something dropped beneath it.

"These are?"

"The decorations that were placed on the Heavenly Origin Sword. It seems like some of them broke off after hitting the table since he left in such a hurry."

These were the decorations that Byuk Lee Dan had collected while he was disguising the Heavenly Origin Sword.

Jung Yeo had spilled it in secret while cleaning up the belongings of Old Man Flower Fan.

Rather than providing concrete evidence, it was better to leave little crumbs here and there to feed their doubts.

If they weren't discovered now, I could've ordered Jung Yeo to give it to them later, saying that one of the maids had found it

while cleaning.

Ma Jung Soo didn't make a rash decision. He wanted to find more concrete evidence to determine whether or not Old man Flower Fan was the true culprit or if he was framed..

“First find this old fox first! Hurry!”

“Yes!”

“And make sure none of this gets out!”

“Of course.”

Si Gon quickly left the room. Since he was someone who usually kept quiet, Ma Jung Soo didn't worry about him.

If Old Man Flower Fan did betray them, and if his father found out, then this would become a major problem.

If it was stolen from someone else, it might've been different, but he would be humiliated because he'd have been backstabbed by his own men. No matter who caused this mess, he was going to take care of this silently.

When Ma Jung Soo turned his head towards the window he was deeply surprised.

“Aigooo!”

The mysterious woman was looking into the room. He was more surprised because this was after telling Si Gon to keep it silent.

‘F*cking B*tch! You f*cking scared me!’

He wanted to say these words, but he held them down since she was someone his father had sent.

Without a word the woman disappeared like a ghost.

“No one knows anything! Don’t you dare open your mouth!”

Whether she heard what he’d said or not, she was gone.

Boom!

Ma Jung Soo broke the table

“Sh*t! Son of a!”

Nothing was going his way.

Chapter 46: There Is No Next Time(1)

Late at night, Jung Yeo came to my room with a bottle of wine in his hand.

“Would you like to have a drink with me?”

“Sounds Good”

From his attitude, as well as his late visit, I could tell that he was about to tell me his decision.

Was he going to follow me, or stay as the Bangju of the Yang Clan.

He made up his mind rather quickly so I didn't know which choice he would make.

We had a light conversation while drinking our wine. He was the one who was talking while I was listening.

He told me stories about when he first joined the Kang Ho.

When he was still a child a Kang Ho-In saved his family by killing off some bandits. After that day he was determined to become a Kang Ho-In.

He then told me about the different circumstances he had to go

though.

By the time we were almost done with the bottle, he had reached the most recent events of his life.

“As you can see I am just an ordinary person. No, rather I think I am below that of an ordinary person. Somehow I made my way to become the vice-leader of the Yang Clan, and was used like a tool. That is when I met you, Young Master Byuk, and you made me into the Gaju of the Yang Clan.”

Then he asked me while staring into my eyes, “Do you still want me even though I am like this?”

I kept it short, “I do”

“Let me just ask you one last thing, what is the dream that you wish to achieve?”

The first thing that I thought of was the Spirit Sword State. As a martial artist, I truly wanted to reach this state since I couldn't achieve it in my past life.

However there were many others things that I wanted to achieve.

First I wanted to know whether or not I was poisoned. If I was I would get my revenge. I wanted to get revenge on the people who poisoned me and betrayed Kal Sa Ryang.

I also wanted to raise the Byuk Clan to be the strongest Clan of all the Central Plain. As well as show filial piety to my parents and nurture Kwang Du and the rest of the Sword Sect into fine martial artists. I also wanted to reunite with Baek Pyo and Kal Sa Ryang.

Now that I think about it, I truly wanted to do a lot.

Since Jung Yeo was asking for my grand ambition I could give him one answer.

How would I answer his question?

Then I thought of something, and said, "I want happiness."

Wouldn't I be happy if I achieved all of my goals?

"I want to be happy, and I want everyone around me to be happy as well."

Jung Yeo looked at me dumbfounded then busted into laughter, "Ha ha ha!"

He stopped laughing and said, "I am sorry. You said something that I never expected."

"It's alright. What kind of answer did you expect?"

“I was nervous that you might say something like world unification.”

He was expecting that I would be the Sleeping Dragon that was going to bring change to the world.

Since I was someone who once achieved unification of the world I knew how difficult it was.

“I am sorry for not living up to your standards.”

He smiled at my reply.

Then Jung Yeo kowtowed in front of me.

“I greet my master. I swear unto the heavens that I will serve you faithfully until I die”

I could tell that my answer of finding happiness reached his heart more strongly than achieving world unification would have.

I grabbed his hands and raised him up.

“I will think of you as part of my family. Please help me, who is lacking in many ways.”

“I will give you my life.”

“I will prove to you that your choice was the correct one.”

“I wish to become happy alongside you, my lord”

I was truly happy. It wasn't hard bringing him to my side since I had helped him while he was on a tough spot. However forcefully bringing him into my side wouldn't have this type of effect. He wouldn't be this open and loyal if I pressured him into submitting to me.

He was truly showing his sincerity and loyalty.

Following Kwang Du, the Sword Sect as well as Kong Soo Chan, I have now managed to obtain another faithful subordinate.

I needed to further develop my relationship with them.

Their loyalty could change the next day, or it could never change in a thousand years. This loyalty could change with a single word or not change with a thousand words.

But I was going to accept this risk and develop the relationship between us since there was no perfect human relationship.

The next day I arrived back home.

Since I pressured Ma Jung Soo into a corner I decided it was a good time to take a break and take care of business back at home.

I planned to let Jung Yeo operate the Yang Clan independently. Even though Jung Yeo said that he was willing to merge with the Byuk Clan I didn't think it was necessary yet, so I said no. I planned on raising many independent organizations and merging them at the critical time. I was someone who once operated the largest organization in all of Kang Ho. I had hundreds of organizations like the Yang Clan working under me.

So I left him with two tasks.

First, I ordered him to send a good spy to shadow Ma Jung Soo. Especially if he tried to make any moves on Song Hwa Rin, I told him to let me know right away.

Second, I told him to make a message system through the carrier Pidgeon. Of course it was outside from both our houses since I didn't want to attract too much attention to our houses. Since Ma Jung Soo was at the Yang Clan house so they really couldn't do anything that would attract too much attention. In addition I allowed him to choose trustworthy subordinates to run the system. Since we were a martial artist organization anything related to information was very important. For added safety measures I added something special.

It was a secret code that only Jung Yeo and I could understand.

In the Murim Alliance there were many different codes. From simple codes to more complex ones that were used in the battlefield.

For this, I used one of the more complex ones. It was similar to one of the codes that Kal Sa Ryung used, so there was no way for anyone to decipher this code.

Jung Yeo was once again amazed seeing that I knew such complicated code.

This is how you are supposed to show faith to your subordinate. Later on down the road they might not remember it much, but it was important to show your abilities now.

I told Kwang Du about the death of Old Man Flower Fan.

“Ah! Really? You did very well young master.”

He was as happy as if he took care of his own nemesis.

“Are you that happy?”

“Yes. I am sure the child as well as the elderly woman are happy in the afterlife. I am so happy that I really want to tell the owner that went to the countryside, that we took revenge for him.”

“He will know eventually.”

“Will he?”

“I am sure. How will he forget about it? Unless he truly wants to forget, he will know what happened. He will think that justice is still alive in Kang Ho.”

I wanted to tell the owner right now too, but it will only bring more danger to them. Returning everything back to normal must happen later.

“I hope so too”

“Kwang Du-ya”

“Yes young master?”

“Get stronger”

My words had many meanings, but I was certain Kwang Du understood what I meant.

That afternoon I oversaw the Lesser Sword Sect’s training.

“Are you training hard today?”

“Yes Sir!”

Everybody's answer was loud and their gaze was sharp.

Individual training, group training, along with throwing practice, everyone should have been tired but no one seemed to complain or show much sign of fatigue.

Anyone who has taught before will agree with me, that you are more naturally inclined to teach those who try their hardest.

Since all of you are trying your best, I shall as well.

It seems that their hard work paid off as they had improved vastly. Especially Kwan He, I really wanted to praise him in front of everybody.

Kwan He sought for me after practice.

“Sect Master. I have a question about my martial arts”

His passion for learning was truly fierce. I could tell because right after he finished the intense group training he sought after me to learn something.

“Whenever I use this technique I feel like I am losing my balance.”

And he showed the technique.

After seeing his performance I said, “That is because the weight distribution on your leg is wrong. Doesn’t this technique use the right leg to execute? But you are putting more weight on your left leg.”

“Yes, you are correct. I learned that balance was the key to this technique. Since more weight would naturally go toward the right leg I decided to put more weight onto the left leg.”

“That is precisely what is disrupting your balance. Just naturally put the weight onto your right leg, and maintain your balance through your body.”

“I can do that?”

“Why did you believe you couldn’t do that?”

“I had always learned that balance comes from the legs.”

The martial arts that he learned was called Comprehensive Manual of Sword Technique and it was pretty popular amongst different martial arts schools. It wasn’t a set of special techniques that are handed down through school and sects but a fairly common technique that was widely available. Since it was decent sword art, many different martial school taught it. However, there was limit to the Comprehensive Manual of Sword Technique since it was so popular.

Since Kwan He learned these sword techniques thoroughly he would eventually hit a barrier. But there was no need for me to tell him this yet. That was still a long way off.

“In martial arts there is never a ‘definite’ as there will always be ‘change,’ since that is the way of martial arts.”

“Ah, I understand Sect Master. Thank You!”

But he wouldn’t truly comprehend what I meant yet since what I said to him had a more profound meaning behind it.

I could see that the callouses in his hands were the result of his intense training. He was following my guide by the book, and was buried under his training. So I told him the complete opposite thing that I said before.

“He-Ya”

“Yes, Daejoo-nim”

“You can take it slow. Even though training diligently is good but going overboard can lead to setbacks, just like the technique that you showed me.”

“I will remember your guidance.”

After bowing to me he left. Regardless of my warning I am sure

he would train diligently.

Now that I think about it the words that I said to him might apply to me as well.

Even though Kwan He who was only twenty-three might not know it, but I did. There are many things that you can experience when you slow down a bit.

“I don’t think it is wise to accept this deal”

San Dong Merchant Guild’s financial manager, Baek Joong, said worriedly, “You can still cancel it now.”

The owner of the Guild, Ko Soon Kyung, was slumped in his chair with his eyes closed.

Since Baek Joong served Ko Soon Kyung for a long time he could sense that Ko Soon Kyung was giving him the eye, but this matter wasn’t something that he could just back down on.

“Just by his looks, Ma Jung Soo is a dangerous person. Soon Kyung-Nim, please don’t bring in a tiger to chase away pack of wolfs.”

After hearing what Baek Joong said Ko Soon Kyung opened his

eyes, “I am about to get eaten by wolves, what does it matter if I invite some tigers?”

Baek Joong said with a surprised tone, “Is the situation that grave?”

“Yes, it is. Due to the last incident, the other two merchants’ guilds are at our throats.”

Last time San Dong Merchant Guild tried make a deal with the Yang Clan to get to the central plain but then there was some confrontation with other merchant guilds.

“Ever since they figured out that we couldn’t make the deal with the Song Clan they are now pressuring us even more.”

Since that time, the Northeast Merchants had been pressuring the San Dong Merchants.

Since they were even willing to take risk to pressure the San Dong Merchants, San Dong

Merchants were losing business left and right.

There was no other place than an inn where news spread the fastest. After hearing the news that the San Dong Merchants weren’t doing so well they were losing even more business agreements.

Baek Joon made a serious expression. Since he was the internal financial manager he didn't know that such things were taking place.

“Even if we make an agreement with them, how would we provide a hundred thousand nyang? Why are you going to such a degree to make an agreement with them?”

“I plan on borrowing money from one of the Dark Guilds”

Baek Joong was surprised.

The Dark Guild got their title because they did many backroom dealings at night. They were either loan sharks or they did things that would only benefit them. It was easy to borrow money from them.

But this was a very dangerous deal. Not only would they have to pay high interest, if they didn't pay back the money then the Dark Guild would do anything to get their money back.

“They are a very dangerous organization”

“I know”

“No, I don't think you know. If you did, you wouldn't make such a rash decision”

Baek Joong continued, “The ones who do the dirty work of Dark Guild are rather scary.

They are not only skilled in martial arts, but they are very ruthless. If they have a target they will do anything to get their money. There are also rumors saying that they use banned weapons to fight against other Kang Ho-in.”

Unfortunately, even though he said all this he couldn't change Ko Soon Kyung's mind.

“I will borrow one hundred thousand nyang from them”

“Guild Master”

Ko Soon Kyung closed his eyes again and sunk into his chair, “Since this mountain is full of wolves and tigers it is not going to get worse inviting in some scoundrels.”

Chapter 47: There Is No Next Time(2)

Rumors started spreading across San Dong.

Everyone was nervous after hearing the rumors that Ma Jung Soo was making a deal with the San Dong Merchant Guild.

If building a martial arts school wasn't enough, joining hands with a merchant guild would give them that much more influence.

After hearing the rumors, father and mother were both worried.

"I am really unsure what their plans are."

"That is what I am saying, I am afraid that they might want to take over San Dong for themselves."

I was calm since I was in control of everything.

"Don't worry too much. Is our San Dong a place that can be taken over so easily?"

I couldn't tell my parent that I had everything under control, since it wasn't going to be the convenient.

After meeting with my parents I went to meet Kong Soo Chang.

“I have something I must ask you”

He was pretty quick in guessing what it was about.

“Is it about the San Dong Merchant Guild?”

“Yes, can you tell me everything you know about the San Dong Merchant Guild?”

“Since the rumors started going around saying that the San Dong Merchant Guild made a pact with Ma Jung Soo, the Northeastern Merchant Guild has been under pressure.”

I think it was because of the pressure that the name Heavenly Dao Gate carried.

Kong Soo Chan told me everything that had to do with San Dong Merchant Guild. It seems that the situation was worse than I expected.

“What do you believe San Dong Merchant’s biggest weakness is?”

He quickly answered my sudden inquiry.

“Being too blunt“

Aside from that he told me another flaw that they had.

“He had an ambition to raise the San Dong Merchant into the Central Plain. This was the reason why many of his business transactions were forceful. Due to that he made many enemies and got into huge debt. A long time ago he might have been someone who could have achieved such a dream. However, as time went on, things changed. Everything got younger, faster, and newer but he stayed the same. He was stuck in the past.”

Kong Soo Chan brought another important thing.

“Ah, also there is a rumor going around saying the San Dong Merchants Guild paid Ma Jung Soo a hundred thousand nyang for making a pact.”

“One hundred thousand nyang?”

This was a huge sum of money.

“If San Dong Merchant Guild’s position isn’t well, where did they get the money from?”

“I don’t think I can look further into it.”

“Then?”

“But I believe they got it off the Dark Guild.”

Dark Guild! This was also a group that I knew of. They were an organization that really knew how to move money in secret.

“I heard that they were a very dangerous organization.”

“Yes, it is best if you don’t make any deals with them. However, it seems San Dong’s only option was to borrow from them.”

“You have been a great help, thank you.”

“No need to thank me.”

I could have asked Kong Soo Chan to look more into Ma Jung Soo, San Dong Merchant, and Dark Guild. But I didn’t need to task him with such a difficult task since I gained someone who was more experienced at this sort of work.

I sent Jung Yeo a message. I told him to look into what sort of position San Dong Merchants were in. If they were borrowing money from the Dark Guild, I tasked him to look into everything from when, where and how they were borrowing money. I told him to find out no matter the cost.

The answers came back three days later.

Two days later, Ma Jung Soo came to see me. Even though it was

an unexpected visit I already

knew that he was coming as Jung Yeo reported his movements beforehand.

“Hahaha, brother, have you been well?”

I don’t recall making a brotherhood pact with him, but he is calling me brother regardless.

“Have you been well?”

“I am fine”

It seems like he was in a good mood. It was probably because he was promised a hundred thousand nyang from the San Dong Merchants.

“Then why are you here?”

“I just came to visit on my way back.”

“You have visited at a great time. Please come in.”

“Rather than that, let’s go outside.”

“What?”

“Didn’t you promise before? That you will show your fiancé. She must be healed by now. This brother of yours wants to see how the number one beauty in San Dong looks like.”

He should be busy worrying about Old Man Flower Fan but he still hadn’t forgotten about Song Hwa Rin.

I knew that this wasn’t an ordinary meeting. If it was, he would have went to Song Hwa Rin directly. However, since he wants me to tag along, he wants to steal her from me. It seems that he wants to enjoy taking her from me. Since there were talks about divorce he believed it would be easier.

“Now now, let’s go. If you go with me I am sure she is going to like it.”

Now he was dragging me by the shirt.

“But, to visit this suddenly is...”

Seeing me resist, Si Gon who was beside him gave me a cold stare. I pretended to be pressure by him.

“Alright, Let’s go together.”

As we were leaving the house, a messenger ran toward Si Gon and gave him a letter. His expression darkened as he read the

letter. Then he quickly got to Ma Jung Soo's side and he whispered something in his ear.

“We just received an emergency letter from the San Dong Merchants”

“What is it?”

Si Gon stared at me and coldly said, “Can young master Byuk go back in?”

“Alright”

I closed the door and came back in. Due to my keen senses however, even if they whispered from outside I could hear every word that gets out of their mouth.

“San Dong Merchants couldn't deliver the promised hundred thousand nyang.”

“What? Why?”

“It seems that they were robbed by someone yesterday”

“What blasphemy are you saying?!” Ma Jung Soo raised his voice.

Raising his voice at Si Gon wasn't going to fix anything but couldn't hold back his anger.

“What were they doing?!”

“I don't know the full details but it seems like there is an alert on San Dong Merchants side.”

I grinned in satisfaction inside my house. That hundred thousand nyang was now in my possession.

When their financial advisor and their guards were coming back from the Dark Guild I made my move. Of course, I was wearing face-altering mask, and didn't kill any of them. I was just pressuring them without gravely injuring them. Even though they were the best in San Dong Merchant Guild, they were no match for me. Since the situation called for urgency they didn't sent too many men which made my job easier.

All this was possible due to proper information. Jung Yeo said he spent almost twenty thousand nyang buying this information. This was a huge price given that it was just a small amount of information. But it was worth it.

One hundred thousand nyang and a traceless bank note at that.

In other words this was money that I could freely use. But I will not use it right now. I will use it after taking care of this Ma Jung Soo and his men, when I believe it is safe to use.

This was like killing three birds with one stone.

There were no repercussions for me since it was traceless money from the loan sharks, San Dong will be in a bigger bind, and it would drive Ma Jung Soo insane.

Their conversation continued, “I am sure that it was the doing of that old weasel.”

“Are you talking about Old Man Flower Fan?”

“Who else beside him can do something like this? This is something that can only be caused by someone who knows everything about us.”

“That crazy old man!”

Si Gon carefully said, “I think it is about time we ask help from the Clan. Aren’t there people who can help you?”

“But that woman is always watching us. She is constantly reporting everything that is happening to my father. As you know, this is just a test. A test to determine the next successor. Behind the door, I made even bigger smile since I wanted that ambitious bastard to be the first one to fail that test.

“We must do this by ourselves.”

“Regardless, I think it is best I we head back. Have a talk with the San Dong Merchants about this deal. In a couple of days if we can’t provide enough money then we can forget about building a martial arts school in Jae Nam.”

“Shit!”

His desperate words were like honey to my ears.

Soon after, they knocked on my door.

As soon as I got out Ma Jung Soo said, “I must go back since there is an emergency”

“Oh. A pity but let’s go next time.”

“Yes”

Ma Jung Soo and Si Gon rushed back.

Watching them leave I was smiling.

As soon as I heard the rumors that the San Dong Merchants were making a deal with the Dark Guild I thought of this plan. The best way to cleanly get rid of Ma Jung Soo was striking at his pockets.

I was a bit disappointed since I couldn't say the words.

‘There is no next time for you’

Ma Jung Soo contacted San Dong Merchants again. Ko Soon Kyung said that he was going to gather some money but he couldn't do that right now.

Without knowing what sort of situation Ma Jung Soo was in, Ko Soon Kyung was the one to ask for help. He said that he was going to provide money, so that they could continue their deal.

Unfortunately Ma Jung Soo left after he said that, if they wanted to keep the deal they must provide him with the money first.

‘Idiot buffoons!’

But this downhill had no end.

Si Gon approached with a grim face and told him the bad news, “The people who are in charge of the construction said that they are going to cancel their contract.”

“They dare refuse my request for extension?”

“Yes, it seem so”

“These sons of b*tches. They must want to die!”

There was bloodlust in his eyes.

“It seem like someone spread some rumors.”

“What?”

Si Gon was hesitant in his answer.

“Hurry up and answer me”

“Rumor about you going bankrupt.”

“What?”

Si Gon expected him to break something but Ma Jung Soo remained calm. It seems like he had an epiphany after hearing this rumor.

“So that’s how it is! I know who it is.”

It might seem easy to spread rumor since one just had to go to different inns and restaurants and leaks some rumors, but in reality it wasn’t that simple. To spread a rumor required an

organized effort of many people.

“Old Man Flower Fan cannot be this organized. It must be one of my blasted brothers”

He finally understood why Old Man Flower Fan betrayed him. It was because another successor had already approached him before him.

Si Gon agreed with him, “That is also what I believe”

The reason why he was willing to take in someone that was an outsider was because he didn’t trust anyone from the inside. But it seems that it had the opposite effect.

Bang!

He broke another table since he couldn’t hold back his rage.

There hadn’t been any other time that he felt like this. He believed that he was pretty smart but today he was played by one of his brothers.

The thing that was now driving Ma Jung Soo was the desire to kill.

He wanted to find Old Man Flower Fan and kill him. He wanted to capture him alive, and torture him until he dies, but that was for

another time. First, there were things he must take care of.

“Yes, no matter how messy the process is, all that matter is the result”

If he was able to overcome this he might still look good in front of his father.

“Hurry and gather some money!”

“How can I do that?”

“Do it by any means possible! Don’t just stand there wasting time, do something, anything. Whether you steal or kill, get some money now!”

Although Si Gon was a bodyguard due to his age, and his position in the Heavenly Dao Gate he believed this wasn’t the best option.

“Yes, I understand.”

Si Gon silently left the room.

Si Gon was alone at an inn drinking.

Since it was late the customers left one by one, and he was alone in the inn.

He was greatly angry at the actions of Ma Jung Soo, but he understood how he felt. Since he too was driven into a corner.

He went to various places gathering money. He visited other merchant guild to get some money but due to the rumors the merchants wiggled their way out of lending him money. He truly wanted to kill them all.

“These mother*king merchants”

Since it involved money it seems like they didn't fear for their life. Thus he didn't have any method to take care of this. He was a man who lived by the blade, so he was lacking when it came to making deals.

He usually didn't drink much but after today he was binge drinking.

“Hey get me another bottle of wine!”

“Yes”

Yawning, the waiter entered the kitchen. Since he was in a bad mood he wanted to beat up the waiter.

He chose Ma Jung Soo because Ma Jung Soo had the least amount of men working below him.

He thought that he would get all the credit if Ma Jung Soo succeeded. Si Gon believed that because there wasn't much competition he was going to get a better position if he succeeded; that was why he helped Ma Jung Soo.

“Shit!”

He drank the last drop in the bottle. He could understand the Ma Jung Soo was lacking here and there since he knew about it. However, what Si gon couldn't take was forcefully abusing people.

He couldn't take it when people forced him to do something.

He believed that Ma Jung Soo was smart enough to not crack under pressure, but it seems that it was the opposite. Since Ma Jung Soo was driven into corner he was making many rash decisions.

Si Gon couldn't betray Ma Jung Soo, who was going to accept him this late into the competition.

“Hey punk! Hurry up and bring me another bottle!”

The moment Si Gon turned around.

Smack!

He knew the moment he was smacked. It was the same fist that hit him at the vault.

Chapter 48: Closer Than Ever(1)

A single decorated carriage arrived at a manor.

The individuals inside of the carriage were the San Dong Merchants' owner Ko Soon Kyung and the financial advisor Baek Joong.

When the carriage came to a halt, Baek Joong said with a nervous expression, "Master, meeting him personally will be very dangerous. Please wait here and allow me to meet him."

"It's alright."

Ko Soon Kyung opened the carriage door and got out, Baek Joong quickly rushed after him. The place that these two old men arrived at without a single bodyguard was the headquarters of the Dark Merchant Guild.

There were many Dark merchants in various places, especially near major cities like San Dong. However no one knew if they were a single organization or different entities since they were shrouded in mystery.

But they had one thing in common. Regardless of their location and size all Dark merchants were ruthless and greedy; thus, they were a fearful entities.

The Dark Merchant that Ko Soon Kyung arrived at was the

biggest organization in San Dong.

When the two men arrived, an ordinary looking youth brought the two men inside. Although this youth looked calm and relaxed, thinking about the fact that this youth was part of the guild made the two merchants fearful.

Inside the room, a fifty-year-old man was waiting for them. Though since this man was wearing a face-alteration mask his age didn't matter much.

Then he introduced himself as Ya Chun.

“So, I heard that you lost the money before even being able to use it.”

“Yes, that was the case.”

Ko Soon Kyung was desperate. After losing that money he became so senseless that he would even ask his lender to aid him.

“Please help me.”

“What do you want us to do?”

“Please help me get my money back.”

“Hu Hu, you think this a lost toy or something? How can it be that easy?”

“If I can’t find that money then my guild will go bankrupt, and you will never be able to receive your payment”

At that moment the amusement in Ya Chun’s face was gone and all was left was a cold expression. But since he was wearing a face alteration mask they could only imagine what his real expression was.

His calm and composed attitude changed as well

“Hey, are you belittling us?”

As raised his voice his killing intent could be felt.

Even though he was in this situation, Ko Soon Kyung didn’t back down.

“How could we even think of such thing? I am just telling you the truth.”

“Shut up, Before I rip open your mouth.”

The killing intent driven out by Ya Chun was felt by Ko Soon Kyung’s skin which made him unable to open his mouth.

Ya Chun coldly warned him, “I will tell you what is going to happen if you cannot pay your debt.

First I will send your wife to the homeless and she will have to serve at least a hundred homeless every day. Your daughter, I will sell as a prostitute. I will make your son a slave for a cargo company on the shore, I am going to overwork him but will never allow him to kill himself. Finally, I will carve out your eyes, rip out your tongue, and leave you on the streets. I am sure that some people will pity you and give you a couple of nyang here and there.”

Ko Soon Kyung’s face turned pale.

“So if you don’t want to pay then you don’t have to. I am just going to say I paid a hundred thousand nyang to watch this good show.”

Ko Soon Kyung swallowed and said with a darkened face, “I know who stole the money”

“Good, then go and get it”

“But I don’t have to ability to”

“Who is it?”

“Ma Jung Soo”

Ya Chun's eyes lit, "Isn't he the person who you were supposed to give hundred thousand nyang to?"

"Yes, I am sure he plans on getting double the amount from me."

"Your proof is?"

"He has subordinates who are capable of stealing money from me."

"There are hundreds of experts in Kang Ho who could do that. That evidence is a bit lacking."

"No! I am sure, it has to be him. Who in their right mind would try to take the money that is going to be used by Heavenly Dao Gate?"

Seeing Ya Chun nod in agreement, Ko Soon Kyung quickly said, "If you can get us back our money I will give you thirty thousand more nyang than promised. So please."

"So you want us to face Heavenly Dao Gate? What happens if we get wiped out? Then you don't have to pay back your debt right. Isn't that what you are thinking?"

"No, that's not what I meant"

Ya Chun made a smile. This expression was even scarier than being angry.

Then he said in a calm voice, “Go back, and think about getting back my money. I am sure you are not a person who is going to fall that easily. That is the reason why I gave you the money as well. Go, and remember that I said.”

Ko Soon Kyung left the room more depressed than ever.

When they got into their carriage and left, Baek Joong who silent until now opened his mouth, “What did I say? Didn’t I say it was going to be useless?”

Ko Soon Kyung became calm and regained his composure.

“I already predicted that he would respond this way.”

“Then why did you go visit him?”

“He was bound to find out that I lost the money. No, maybe he already predicted that I would lose the money. Anyway, he was bound to find out that I wouldn’t be able to repay the money for some time. I went to him to buy some time. If I told him that Ma Jung Soo had the money he wouldn’t be able to get back the money that easily, so I bought us some time.”

“Oh!”

Baek Joong was amazed by Ko Soon Kyung. Even though things didn't go very well, he was amazed at how calculating his master was.

“Do you believe it was them?”

Ko Soon Kyung gave a sigh and answered, “Who else could it be besides them.”

Sometime after the two men left, another man names Koo Chul came into the room. This was one of Ya Chun's subordinate who he took a liking to.

“Someone got a lead on the person who stole the hundred thousand nyang.”

“Who was it?”

“He didn't show himself, but sent a letter. What will you do?”

Ya Chun was in a deep thought for a bit. But he already made his decision. No matter the risk, a hundred thousand nyang was a huge sum of money.

“Go and verify, but be prepared to die if you have to.”

When Si Gon opened his eyes he was in a middle of a forest.

The first thought he had was, ‘Why didn’t they kill me?’

If this was the same individual that attacked him before, then he was more than capable of killing him. He truly didn’t understand.

Was it because he had too much alcohol? Or was it because he was hit in the head? He was truly confused.

‘I must get out of here first.’

He quickly hastened his pace. Then, ten or so men who had a suspicious aura showed themselves.

Although they were all armed with a sword it didn’t look like they were real Kang ho-in. Though that didn’t mean that they were street thugs either. They weren’t bandits nor assassins, but they were giving off some bad vibes.

Si Gon grabbed the hilt of his sword and asked, “Who are you?”

One of the men stepped forward. He was Koo Chul the man sent by Ya Chun.

“Dark Merchant”

These two words said it all and Si Gon could feel it. His opponent took pride in being a martial artist from the Dark Merchants Guild and that he wanted Si Gon to feel intimidated.

However Si Gon had no intention of playing this game with them. He considered the Black Merchants as no more than street thugs.

“Do you know who I am?”

“You are someone who is either crazy or has the balls to mess with our money”

This wasn't the response that he was expecting. ‘What kind of bulls*t are they saying?’ Si Gon didn't clearly understand the situation since he believed they were men sent by Old Man Flower Fan. Since he and the Old Man Flower Fan had bad blood with each other, he thought they were here for him.

With a questioning tone Si Gon asked, “I don't know why you are acting like this but I am sure that this is a misunderstanding.”

Then Koo Chul looked at Si Gon as if he should beg for forgiveness.

“If there is a misunderstanding, shouldn't we try to solve it?”

Si Gon couldn't say anything because he was baffled. He was going to say that they were betrayed by Old Man Flower Fan, but since they came out like this he couldn't say anything.

Si Gon was boiling with anger. He wanted to kill these scums to vent out his anger. But thinking about what happened yesterday with Ma Jung Soo, he couldn't get into any more trouble. Thus he bit his tongue and tried to hold it in when they said.

“Let me see your wallet.”

“What? You want to search me now?”

“Let's not make it too difficult since we are in the same boat. I need something to report to the top. If you tell us truthfully, things can go much easier.”

Si Gon was now exploding with anger, “You punks, if you know anything I am going to crush your skulls...”

When Si Gon put his hands in his pocket, he froze. He slowly took out the contents of his pocket.

It was full of crumpled bank notes.

Then Koo Chul said jokingly, “Ah you see, aren't you rich”

“This isn't... my money.”

“Of course it isn’t. Since it is ours.”

“Son of a! This is a setup! Who told you that I was here? It must be the person that told you. He wants to place that blame on me! If not then why do I have this? You must have some brain to comprehend what I just told you right.”

Koo Chul nodded, “Alright, I believe you, but you must come with us. You must report it directly to my master.”

Si Gon knew that regardless of whether or not they trusted him if he went with them then he would be in deep trouble.

He was about to explode with rage. So he made the decision, ‘let’s think about it after killing them all’

After making this decision he unsheathed his sword and charged at them. Then the men who were protecting Koo Chul took out their weapons and stood in front of him.

Slash!

Si Gon killed the two closest guards.

When he was about to get to the third, Koo Chul threw something from his hand.

Fwoom!

With a loud explosion Koo Chul's compressed killing intent exploded.

Si Gon retreated few steps while swinging his sword to deflect it. The blast was so strong that he thought he would drop his weapon.

However this was not the end of it. Another man threw something that exploded.

Fwoom!

This time he tilted his body but he couldn't dodge it completely.

Stab!

A very sharp object lodged into his shoulder.

Fliing! Stab!

Si Gon swung his sword toward the man who threw that last dagger. It penetrated his chest.

Then he grabbed the object that was stuck in his shoulder and tried to take it out. Unfortunately he couldn't take it out all the way since he started losing strength in his arms. Then he realized

that it was poison. The dagger that he was hit with was smeared with poison.

Fwoong!

This was the third attack of Koo Chul and this time it found its mark, square in Si Gon's back.

“Kahhhh!”

Si Gon screamed like a madman and swung his sword wildly. Another man was cut down by Si Gon.

But his movements started to slow down.

Stab!

The men who was standing around him stabbed him in the back. Fountain of blood started rushing out.

“... these pieces of trash...”

He swung his sword to no avail. He couldn't hit anyone, but rather he was getting stabbed by them.

Stab! Stab! Stab!

Since he couldn't stand anymore he collapsed. If this was a normal fight this would have never happened. Unfortunately this was not a normal fight since they used were using forbidden techniques of Kang Ho, on top of which they even used poison.

Koo Chul stabbed the dead body to make sure he was dead.

“This punk! He dares to raise his blade against us!”

Stab! Stab! Stab! Stab!

Koo Chul as well as his men were defiling the body.

I was staring at them coldly from afar. Now, I had taken out both of Ma Jung Soo's wings. I didn't invite the Black Merchants just to kill Si Gon. If I wanted that, I could have dealt with him by myself. I had a bigger plan for them.

The real reason why I used the Black Merchant was so that I could place the blame of Ma Jung Soo's death on them after I kill him.

I really didn't care what happened to the Black Merchants since they were entities that should be exterminated from this Kang Ho. If they weren't exterminated by the Heavenly Dao Gate, then I would personally get rid of them later.

Now the only problem was that mysterious woman. From the beginning that woman was only observing this whole situation.

If she wanted to protect Si Gon then she wouldn't let him leave by himself after finding out that Old Man Flower Fan betrayed them. Unfortunately she had no interest in them. From this, I had two questions. First, would she still be passive even if Ma Jung Soo died? Second, what is her real skill level?

Chapter 49: Closer Than Ever (2)

The headquarters of the Dark Merchants was turned upside down after it was discovered that the person that they killed was Si Gon of Heavenly Dao Gate.

“You crazy punk! How could you kill him?”

Koo Chul expressed his chagrin, “I didn’t plan on killing him. In the blink of an eye, he charged us with a sword in his hand. You can ask the others.”

“Regardless you punk!”

Koo Chul quickly retreated a couple of steps since he thought he was going to be slapped in the face.

Ya Chun said with a sigh, “Why does it have to be the Heavenly Dao Gate.”

“Don’t worry, there were no witnesses. We also got rid of him without a trace.”

“But there is someone who knows about this.”

“Who? Who saw us do it?”

“The person who told us where he was.”

“Oh!”

The reason why Ya Chun was so agitated was also because of this. There was someone who knew what happened. This was even more of a problem than them killing Si Gon.

“We were played like a fool by him.”

“I am sorry.”

This was when Koo Chul understood the gravity of the situation and lowered his head.

Ya Chun decided not to blame him any further. This wasn't Koo Chul's fault, it his own mistake for sending him to a place when he should have gone himself.

However, he wanted to know why the person who told him where Si Gon was would go to such lengths.

What was that person's motive?

‘If he was able to steal the money from San Dong Merchants and make such a trap... then he could have easily got rid of Si Gon. So why?’

Then he thought of something, “Is it because he was targeting

us?”

“Of course, that must be it.”

“Whoever it is, I will rip him to pieces.”

“If you want to do that, we must first find out who it is. This must be something related to Ma Jung Soo. Try to find out anything about Ma Jung Soo in secret.”

“Can we put our hands on them?”

“Since it came to be like this, be proactive about it. If we don’t then we are going to die without knowing who it was. But first, find out everything about Ma Jung Soo.”

“Please leave that to me”

Koo Chul left.

Ya Chun went to a window and gazed outside. He was certain that something was happening without him knowing about it. It had been a while since he felt his heartbeat and his skin tingle, but it wasn’t this terrible. There was bound to be a huge reward after such a dangerous situation.

Ma Jung Soo was walking back and forth in his room aimlessly. Si Gon didn't come back the next day.

At first, he was angry at him. Did he leave just because of that? How childish of him.

In the afternoon, he started to worry since Si Gon wasn't back yet. Though he shook off his concern thinking that Si Gon wasn't someone who would get done in so easily. During that process, another table was broken. No one knew how many tables he had broken now. Then in the evening since Si Gon wasn't back, he determined that Si Gon was dead. Si Gon wasn't the type to disappear without a note, he believed that something must have happened to him.

Ma Jung Soo was boiling with anger, "Son of a b*tch. No matter what you do I will never back down."

The people he was angry at were his brothers. He believed it was done by one of his brothers since there was no one else who he could think of who could pull off such a thing.

Ever since he was young, he never wanted to lose to them. He was bullied by his brothers since a young age because he was born from a concubine. Thus he couldn't forgive them even more.

"Watch and see how I will get my revenge."

From a half-opened door, there was someone who was looking at

him. It was that woman.

“Hey look!”

The woman was always emotionless regardless of what happened.

“Yeah, report everything. Make sure you don’t leave anything behind. But make sure you report how I overcome this. You understand, b*tch?!”

The woman didn’t say anything.

“I said, do you understand?!”

She didn’t say anything and left.

“Foolish b*tch. She must not have any emotion. If I become the successor just wait and see what is going to happen to you.”

His words slipped through the crack of the door and into the woman’s ear. Listening to his words the woman’s expressionless face became colder than ever.

The next day, Ma Jung Soo went to look for Jung Yeo.

Since even Si Gon was gone he couldn't forgive what had happened.

“Why are you looking for me this early in the morning?”

“I came here since I have a couple of requests that I must ask of you.”

Although he was surprised by the sudden visit he tried to stay cool.

“Please tell me what you need.”

“I am sure you must already have heard the rumors. My deal with San Dong Merchant was canceled.”

“I heard that there were some odd circumstances. But I am sure that you will recover soon.”

“Regarding that, I might need your help.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“I cannot start the construction of Martial Arts School like this. Could you, Jung Bangju help me?”

Jung Yeo couldn't reply immediately. What did he mean by helping him? Did he want money? Maybe his men?

"I am just afraid that my men and I would only hold you back from achieving your goals."

Jung Yeo declined nicely but Ma Jung Soo didn't back down.

"Isn't the Yang Clan the strongest Clan in San Dong? If you help me this time I will never forget your deeds."

Ma Jung Soo was in a position where he had to set up the Heavenly Dao Gate's Martial Arts School. If he couldn't do this, it meant that he failed his successor test.

He just needed to get over this hurdle.

Although the contract became void it was only a matter of paying them. If he could get the money to pay them then everything will go back to normal.

At first, he didn't use the Yang Clan because he didn't need to. He was also warned by Old Man Flower Fan not to trust outsiders that easily.

But now things were different.

If he was able to successfully accomplish this mission with the

help of the Yang Clan then he would have passed his first test.

He decided that for the next test, he would accomplish it better with new men and subordinates. However, since he was set back so much by his brothers, he was going to get his revenge on the next test. He wasn't the type to let go of grudges easily.

“I understand your intention. Please give me some time to think about it.”

“Alright. But don't make me wait too long.”

As Ma Jung Soo was leaving the room he said to himself, ‘Ha! It won't be that easy to get out of this one.’

He planned on using everything that he could.

‘Just watch me, I won't go down alone. Just think about how I got here.’

After sending Ma Jung Soo away he entered my room and reported everything that happened with Ma Jung Soo.

“How should we proceed now?”

This was truly a troublesome situation. Once they started helping someone that greedy then the Yang Clan wouldn't be able to make it out in one piece.

“He is planning on using the Yang Clan as a sacrificial lamb”

“That is what I believe as well sir”

It looked as if Jung Yeo wanted to curse Ma Jung Soo, so I said it for him, “Dirty son of a b*tch. I am sure that you want to crush him and beat him to pieces.”

“I want to trample him.”

By cursing at Ma Jung Soo it seemed he was able to vent out some of his anger.

“Don't worry, his final destination is not far off.”

I already made a plan to get rid of him along with Black Merchants. Except there were a few components that were missing. One of these was the mysterious woman.

“Rather, this is a good opportunity.”

“What do you plan on doing sir?”

I replied to him with a smile, “Since he is digging his own grave let's lend him a hand.”

The next day I followed Jung Yeo to meet Ma Jung Soo.

Jung Yeo calmly started the conversation, “As you know I haven’t been the Bangju for a while. So I am still not in full control of the Clan, and there some things that I must personally attend to. Thus, I brought him to act in my place to help achieve whatever you wish to achieve.”

Ma Jung Soo looked at me cautiously.

Since I was wearing a face-alteration mask and had changed my voice he didn’t recognize me. I was wearing the top-tiered mask, so unless it was a master of disguise no one would know the difference. Although this mask may have cost a lot it was worth it since this was a very important task.

“He is one of my men who I trust the most. He has great skill, and is reliable. I brought him since he might be of great assistance to you.”

Through Jung Yeo’s introduction I bowed in greeting.

“It is the first time meeting you sir. My name is Kal Pyo”

I created this name by putting together Kal Sa Ryang and Baek Pyo's names together.

I took this opportunity to find out anything I could about that woman.

Since there was a saying that goes like this, "Keep your friends close, but keep your enemies closer."

Ma Jung Soo still had the unsatisfied look on his face so Jung Yeo quickly said, "Don't worry the Yang Clan will help you in anyway we can."

Hearing this Ma Jung Soo's face finally brightened a bit.

"Good, Since he is someone who was recommended by you, I will trust him."

"Thank you for trusting me."

Jung Yeo looked at me and said, "He is a very important person so you cannot make any mistake."

I respectfully bowed to Jung Yeo and said, "I obey your order."

I took residence in the room where Old Man Flower Fan once was. As I unpacked my belongings and went out the corridor, I saw that woman.

She was walking this way from the other end of the corridor. So I stood outside the door and watched as she walked.

I was nervous, but I didn't hide that nervousness. I perfectly controlled myself and only revealed what I wanted to make me look like Kal Pyo.

When I saw her face up close, it wasn't that beautiful or fascinating. Was it because she didn't have any makeup on that she looks cold? The aura that she was giving out was one that was empty and cold, like a doll.

Then we exchanged glances with one another. Even her eyes were devoid of emotion. I remember seeing those eye before. That was the look of the assassins reared by the thirteen demonic alliances. Since when they were young they were conditioned to be devoid of all emotion so that they could accomplish any task that was given to them.

Now that I think about it, the assassins who were sent to kill me all had that look.

Could it be this woman was one of them?

Did Ma Bong Gi really raise this woman? Then when did he even start? From the looks of it, she must have started training at least twenty years ago. This was not something that the Ma Bong Gi that

I knew would do.

Or did she only give off that sort of gaze? There was no way to determine an enemy only with their glance. So it could be that she just have this look.

When she was right in front of me I greeted her first, “My name is Kal Pyo”

She turned her head to look at me, but that was it. She didn’t stop walking and marched on without saying anything.

“Excuse me! Since I introduced myself shouldn’t I get a greeting or something in return? Hey, what is your name!”

The woman disappeared into the corridor.

The next time that I saw her was that night.

Since I couldn’t sleep I went out to the pond to get some air. There I saw there standing by the pond.

Was it because of the moon reflecting on her? Or was it because she was staring down at the pond?

I felt loneliness from her.

The loneliness that she had was due to her emptiness.

The loneliness where you couldn't even comfort yourself because you were empty.

I just looked at her from afar. I couldn't tell if she knew that I was observing her from afar, but that was when I started observing her.

Chapter 50: Closer Than Ever (3)

She woke up early next morning. It was questionable if she was ever truly slept since she went to bed so late and woke up so early. It might be that she was just practicing a basic circulation technique during the night to drive away her weariness.

Early in the morning she went up the mountain and came back down. It seemed as if she was training up in the mountain.

After asking various people through Jung Yeo, I found out that she never missed a day to go up the mountain.

Through this I discovered a very important truth. Which was, she was not here to protect Ma Jung Soo. If she was here for his protection, then she would be guarding him all the time. However, it seemed her mission was not to 'guard' but to 'observe'. Just like how I was observing her.

This couldn't have been better for me since I had decided to get rid of Ma Jung Soo.

I wanted to observe what sort of training she did up in the mountain, but I decided against it. Since I didn't want her to discover my intent, it was better to keep myself under her radar.

However, I had a sense of what sort of martial arts she practiced. I could have confirmed my theory if I could search her with my ki but I needed to stay hidden. From the looks of it, since she didn't have any weapon, she must use some sort of bare-handed martial

art. By observing how she walked I could determine that she was an expert.

Most likely she must be on par with Si Gon or slightly below him. Considering her age, this was a great achievement.

Her skills as well as her atmosphere.

I do not know which secret organization raised her, but she impressed me as well as made me a bit nervous.

Anyways, I was going to use her to my advantage. Her role as an observer was a very important one since I was going to use her to send a message back to whoever she was sent by. I would show them that Ma Jung Soo was eliminated by the Black Merchants.

The next night I stood by the pond observing it. Beautiful lotus flowers were floating on top of the garden, flowing whichever direction the fall winds took them. There were a couple of koi inside the pond but since it was late, they were barely moving.

I was curious, why did she do this? Was it because she wanted to rescue the koi? Or was it because she wanted to kill them.

I then saw the beautiful moon reflecting on the surface of the pond.

I thought maybe it wasn't the koi, but this reflection that she was watching.

After looking at the pond for a little while longer, I turned around and saw her looking this way.

Rather than heading towards her room, she slowly came this way and stood next to me.

Without saying a word and treating me as if I was non-existent, she looked down at the pond.

“Don’t you think it is weird?”

She gave me a small glance after hearing my words.

“I asked you, Isn’t it weird not treating a person like a person when they are standing next to you?”

She said while staring at the pond, “Never”

She said it in such a small voice that most others wouldn’t have been able to hear it. However, I heard it clearly. This was the first word she had said.

Then I replied, “Regardless.”

She turned her head towards me with a perplexed expression, as if questioning my last word.

“Regardless of how you live, you only live once. So, it might be better to live by yourself without intermingling with others.”

Then she turned her gaze back towards the pond.

“Are you not going to tell me your name?”

After looking at the lotus flower for a bit she replied, “Are names so important?”

She may have sounded like she was talking to herself but this was the first time she completed a sentence.

“What is more important than a person’s name? You need to be called something, right? You can’t just be called ‘hey you’.”

She didn’t say anything so I just pretended to give up and said, “Alright. Since you don’t care what your name is I guess it’s fine whether I call you pond or Koi you will be you.”

She just kept looking at the pond expressionlessly.

Looking at her I felt reminiscent of myself. Since it made me realize how emotionlessly I lived my past life.

“I am sorry, I was just in the moment.”

She moved her lips a little in response to my apology. It seemed as if she wanted to say something.

Then someone was calling me from far away.

“Warrior Kal.”

Ma Jung Soo was waving his hand calling for me. Due to his calling the small expression on the woman’s face disappeared.

“Yes”

I replied loudly and went towards him.

Ma Jung Soo asked me with a darkened expression, “What did you ask of her?”

“Nothing much sir. I just asked for her name but she didn’t respond.”

“Didn’t I tell you before? Don’t worry about her.”

I could feel some frustration in his voice.

“I am sorry. We just saw each other by chance...”

“Come to my room later.”

“Yes sir”

Ma Jung Soo went into the building.

When I turned my head back to the pond she was gone.

When I entered Ma Jung Soo’s room he was drinking by himself.

“Come here and have a cup from me”

He seemed to be in a lighter mood than he was before.

So I received the cup that he offered.

“Now, drink it up.”

“Yes sir”

I didn’t hesitate and drunk it. As I was drinking it, I remembered another problem that I had to solve.

Which was poison.

In my previous life, I had reached the apex of poison immune physique. Thus, I could eat and drink without worry. Byuk Lee Dan's body however was not like that.

To achieve the poison immune physique one must change one's physique. After achieving the poison immune physique, rather than forcefully suppressing poison with ki. Those who had the poison immune physique could nullify the effect of most poisons.

Since I once had that physique I knew how difficult it was to achieve. First, you needed a very powerful poison. Not some artificial poison that could be found easily in the black market but a ridiculously powerful naturally occurring poison.

I will say this one more time, no matter how strong the poison may be, it was impossible to create a poison immune physique with an artificially created poison. Thus one must acquire the poison from a natural source.

That wasn't the only thing that you needed. You also needed to have an antidote that you can take at the critical time. If you ate it prematurely the poison will have gone to waste and if you eat it too late you would die. So achieving the poison immune body is not an easy thing.

Another thing was even if you eat the antidote at the right time there was a possibility that you will not be able to achieve it. Consequently, only a handful of people had the poison immune physique.

One must be both brave and have the heaven's blessing to be able to reach it. Since I achieved it once I was prepared to do it again if I had the proper ingredients for it. Unfortunately collecting the proper ingredients was practically impossible.

“Jung Bangju said many compliments about you.”

“I am still lacking in many ways sir”

“Here, have another cup”

I drank another cup that he offered me.

Then he asked me about the woman.

“It seems that you are interested in that woman, but I advise you to find a better woman than her.”

“She must be a very bad person then.”

Jokingly, Ma Jung Soo replied with a smile, “Something beyond that. She is as dangerous as a viper. You know how the saying goes, ‘If a man meets the wrong woman it will ruin his life forever’.”

“Yes I understand”

Even with my response, I could sense some annoyance in his face. I could tell that there was some enmity between the two. So I decided to change the subject.

After some time Ma Jung Soo told me the real reason why he called me..

“The thing is, I need some money...”

“I heard from my master that he would be providing you with some assistance in this matter.”

Just to appease him, Jung Yeo gave him ten thousand nyang. Since I was going to get it back with interest I told him to not be too stingy in lending him the money.

“The money that he lent me is a bit lacking.”

“How much do you need sir?”

“One hundred thousand nyang.”

I acted surprised. Since no one was supposed to know what truly happened.

“When do you need it by sir?”

“The earlier the better, but I need it within five days.”

“You need to get hundred thousand nyang in five days?”

With a surprised yet worrisome and careful expression, I said
“There is a solution”

“What is it?”

“Have you heard about the Dark Merchant Guild?”

“The Dark merchant? Of course, I heard of them. Don’t they lend you money with high interest? I heard that they were greedy and nasty people.”

“Yes. They are people who shouldn’t be approached.”

So I continued to lead him this direction, “Yes, they are nasty and greedy people. If they wanted someone dead they wouldn’t have a second thought about it. They even use the forbidden techniques that are banned in Kang Ho.”

As the martial artists of the Murim Alliance kept their dignity and honor, they didn’t use any techniques pertaining to releasing compressed killing intent or using a poison-tipped weapon. If they were caught using these they would immediately be sentenced.

“So you want to borrow money from them?”

“That is the only way to get one hundred thousand nyang in five days sir”

After giving it some thought he said, “Do they have that much money?”

“From what I heard, through their last transaction, they were able to get a mountain load of money. They should be able to satisfy your financial problems.”

“Alright. Let's say that they have the money. Will they allow me to borrow it so easily? Since I don't have any deposit.”

“Why do you need a deposit?”

“What do you mean by that?”

“What better deposit than your reputation and face.”

“My reputation and face?”

“You are one of the successors to the Heavenly Dao Gate. What deposit would you need?”

There was a grin on Ma Jung Soo's face. It was easy to manipulate him like this since he was driven into a corner the last few days.

However, it was unwise to push everything to him at once. It was more effective to take things one step at a time.

“I am sorry. I I had a slip of tongue. Please disregard what I said sir.”

“No. Your words have some value”

Since being driven into a cornerl he saw this as an opportunity for him to get out.

“Can you get in contact with them?”

“Of course, sir”

He and I refreshingly emptied the bottle of wine.

I am sorry to say but this would be his final drink.

The Dark Merchants received a message.

“Ma Jung Soo contacted us saying he will visit us soon.”

Hearing Ya Chun's words Koo Chul was surprised.

“Could it be that he figured out that we killed Si Gon?”

“It could be”

But no one expected Ma Jung Soo to come here himself.

“You must first hide!”

“What is going to happen if I hide?”

“I will take all the blame and meet him.”

“Stupid punk! What can you do?”

“I am sorry sir.”

Ya Chun was disciplining Koo Chul, but it seemed as if he was in a good mood. Even though Koo Chul was greedy and had a nasty character his loyalty was second to none.

“So what will you do sir?”

He couldn't just run away without knowing the full reason why Ma Jung Soo was here for. He built up his face and reputation through out the years so he couldn't just throw it away like that in

front of his subordinates. Since they were coming into his turf he had nothing to be afraid of.

With a fierce gaze he was prepared for what was to come.

“Gather everyone who is skilled. We must be ready for anything that could happen. If something happens we must eliminate him. Running away is only going to come after that.”

The next day, we left for the Dark Guild headquarter in a carriage.

The only people on the carriage were me and Ma Jung Soo. The mysterious woman saw us leave but didn't come with us. Though I assumed that she was trailing us. I didn't think she would want to miss anything that happened to Ma Jung Soo.

“Do you think he will let us borrow money?”

It seemed that he was uneasy. He would be acting differently if Si Gon and Old Man Flower Fan were by his side but now things were different.

“You must be aggressive.”

“Be aggressive?”

“The thing about these people who live their life in the dark is that they are weak against the strong while they are strong against the weak. They are just wild dogs that don’t know their place. Even though they are Black Merchants they are just country bumpkins in this rural city. There is nothing for you to be afraid of sir.”

It seems Ma Jung Soo gained some courage after listening to my pep talk.

“I feel better with you being here.”

“No need for compliments. Please entrust this task to me.”

I showed him the firmness in my eyes.

“Alright” Ma Jung Soo believed that this was for the best. Since then he could place the blame on me if things went wrong.

The carriage finally arrived at their headquarter.

Chapter 51: There Is No Such Thing As Retreat (1)

When we arrived, the atmosphere in the garden was calm.

It would have been more intimidating if they had over a hundred guards armed to their teeth awaiting our arrival.

Even though they received word that Ma Jung Soo would be coming by, they didn't deviate too much from their normal activities. From this, I discerned that they weren't your average guild, but this was a given since even Si Gon was killed by them.

A youth came out and led us the main pavilion.

Ya Chun was sitting in the middle of the pavilion with ten or so guards behind him. Most likely they were the strongest members of this Dark Guild.

Their stares were completely different from the average martial artist. Their eyes burned with the anger and resentment they held against the Kang Ho-In. Not only that, I could also sense that there were guards hidden all around the room as if they were waiting for their prey.

Although their skills might not be great, they should never be underestimated. Since I had already seen them fight before I knew the tricks they had up their sleeves. Their skills weren't a huge issue, the challenge lay within their weapons. Since they used

poison dipped hidden weapons infused with their ki, I needed to be careful.

Since Ma Jung Soo also sensed that this could be an ambush, he swallowed his saliva. He was rather very nervous.

I approached Ya Chun proudly, only stopping when I reached about ten paces from him. Then, I introduced Ma Jung Soo, “He is Lord Ma Jung Soo. the successor to the Heavenly Dao Gate so you should give your respect to him.”

Then, Ya Chun rose from his seat and greeted Ma Jung Soo, “Welcome. My name is Ya Chun and I am the master of this place. why has your honorable self come to this desolate place?”

After Ma Jung Soo lightly introduced himself, I took the lead as promised.

“Why else do you think we are here?”

It seems that Ya Chun was also very nervous since his face was rigid.

I already knew what he was worried about. He must have been worried that we came here regarding Si Gon’s death.

“Lord Ma has come here to borrow money from you.”

After hearing my words Ya Chun was surprised. Who would have thought that Ma Jung Soo would come here to borrow money?

“Why are you so surprised? Isn’t this something that you do often?”

“Why of course it is, but I still cannot believe that someone so prestigious as yourself must borrow money from someone like me.”

“Even important people need money”

Ya Chun was finally able to relax a bit since they were not here to exact revenge on him.

Then he asked with a relaxed expression, “How much do you need?”

“One hundred thousand nyang.”

The relaxed expression of Ya Chun became colder once more. Not only was this a huge sum of money, but he still couldn’t understand the other parties’ intent. He wasn’t sure if they were here to borrow the money, or take the money as compensation for Si Gon’s death.

So I sent him a mental message

-Since you killed someone belonging to the Heavenly Dao Gate shouldn't you pay the price?

Ya Chun flinched. It was a mixed expression between anger and surprise. Then I continued

-Or, you can test your luck. Will you be able to get out of this unscathed if you lay your hands on the successor? Do you think we came here without any plan? If you let us borrow the hundred thousand nyang we will let that matter go. Of course, we will return the money with interest.

Ya Chun relied mentally

-Why are you messaging me mentally?

-Since we must eliminate you if the death of Si Gon escapes your mouth. Even if we don't want that, that is how things will proceed. You know there is nothing more important than your life.

After sending those mental messages in a colder tone, I said with a lighter tone, "As you have heard Lord Ma plan on creating a Martial Arts School in San Dong. This could be a great opportunity for you."

I prayed that my threat got through to them because if they refused the opposite might happen us.

"Please give me a moment to think about it."

“Please do.”

Ya Chun closed his eyes and was in deep thought. He suspected that the person who spilled the information about Si Gon was Ma Jung Soo. He believed that Ma Jung Soo went as far as eliminating his own men to force them into this situation. Thus getting twice the money in return for his men.

‘Piece of dog sh*t!’

He thought that Ma Jung Soo was even colder and more ruthless than them. However, as he was in this situation, he couldn’t refuse. Since one hundred thousand nyang was not all of their assets, he couldn’t risk their lives for it. So he decided to take action after giving them the money.

After opening his eyes he slowly said, “Alright, I will lend you the money.”

“By tomorrow!”

“Alright.”

“Thank you. You will not regret this decision. Please get the traceless bank notes and meet us at the temple in Mt. Poong.”

With that they finalized their agreement, and signed the

contract.

Ma Jung Soo personally wrote it, and signed it himself.

Although he didn't ask me why he need to sign it, I persuaded him in doing so. He might not like it, but at least it confirmed that he had a hundred thousand nyang.

I made him sign it because I was going to use it later. If someone were to investigate what happened later, this would serve as concrete evidence.

After finalizing the deal, we left the place.

After we left, the pavilion was full of anger. The first person who exploded in rage was Koo Chul.

“Son of a b*tch! Where does he think this is!? I wanted to kill him immediately but I didn't!”

All the other men around him had a similar expression.

But Ya Chun was calm.

“If we want to kill him, we can kill him later.”

After Koo Chul killed Si Gon, Ya Chun investigated everything there was to know about Ma Jung Soo.

Since early on Ma Jung Soo had killed his maids and guards for no reasons.

Although Ya Chun was also an evil person he still had some conscience. He had been involved in many incidents but he never harmed the women, children or the weak.

“You plan on giving that bastard hundred thousand nyang?”

Ya Chun nodded his head.

“Since we are the ones who are clean, let us watch how things go.”

“But, it’s such a large amount of money.”

“Don’t think of it like that.”

Ya Chun was thinking about something else.

“If they were the ones who stole from the San Dong Merchants, they must have a lot of money right?”

“Yes.”

“Then, I am sure they are more than capable of paying back the interest.”

“What? What do you mean?”

“What, you thought I was just giving it to them? Who are we? Even if the Heavenly Dao Gate, no even if his granddaddy came, I will get back my money with interest. This is what they get for making a fool of us.”

After leaving the Dark Guild’s place Ma Jung Soo let out a big sigh and laughed out loud.

“Hahaha, I think you are amazing.”

“You are complimenting me too much sir.”

“No, no, your performance was excellent.”

He looked at me in a new light. He never expected that I would be this good in taking care of business.

“Now we can collect the money tomorrow. I am sure you can take

care of the rest after that.”

I told him that this was the end of my mission to show him that I was not interested in the money.

“Can I trust you for tomorrow as well?”

It seems that Ma Jung Soo still didn’t fully trust the Dark Guild. He was worried that he might fall into their trap and get killed during the process.

But I expected him to react this way.

“Yes, I understand. You can wait outside, I will get the money and come out.”

Since I didn’t say that I will go there alone to get the money but go with him, he was even more happy.

“Ha ha ha, good, good.”

I succeeded in fooling both Ma Jung Soo, and Ya Chun.

Everything was going according to my plan.

I experienced almost everything that I could have experienced in my past life. Whether it be fighting against the experts of the

Thirteen Demon Alliance, or the martial artists of the Murim Alliance, or be it getting entangled in the power struggle of the Murim Alliance, I had experienced all that my previous life had to offer.

Compared to that, this child's play. I was once someone that had been called iron-blooded Mengju, or remorseless Mengju so these things didn't phase me. They should consider this as a divine punishment from me.

But I cannot lower my guard, since there are many unknown variables that are in play like that women.

Whether I am able to successfully retrieve the hundred thousand nyang, kill Ma Jung Soo and place all the blame on the Dark Guild all depended on my ability to trick that woman.

The key point of this plan was not how I was going to kill him, but how I was going to escape without anyone knowing after killing him.

That night I met the woman again at the pond. I purposely went to see her.

“I think you must stop your master.”

She quickly turned her gaze toward me.

“He went to the Dark Guild and got their money by threatening them”

She already knew the fact that we went to the Black Merchant.

I said it with a worried expression, “I had to help him since I couldn’t do anything... As you know the Dark Guilds are a very dangerous group.”

It was necessary to tell her that Ma Jung Soo was involved with them if I wanted to place the blame on the Dark Guild.

I was only able to tell her this since there weren’t any communication between her and Ma Jung Soo.

“He is not my master.”

This wasn’t some single word or phrase like before but a proper conversation. Even if it was proper it still had no emotion in it.

“If you are that worried then you should stop him,” after saying this she went back inside her room.

I was now certain, even if Ma Jung Soo died she would not get involved. Maybe she even wanted him dead.

Then I stared into the night sky.

I felt that this situation with Ma Jung Soo will soon come to an end.

At the foot of Mt. Poong I asked him, “Will you go with me?”

“I am alright. I will wait for you here.”

He was still afraid that he was going to fall into their trap so he was only sending me. Truthfully, he was truly a shameful person. Thankfully, he wasn't afraid that I was going to run off with this money.

Through my acting, I was able to his trust. Also, even if I ran away with the money he assumed he could always get it out of the Yang Clan. So, he was trustful of me.

“Then, I will leave now”

“Do you need such a big bag?”

“If we want to get the traceless back notes sir”

“And the reason why you are doing it?”

“As it is dirty money. There could be problem later on if you go.”

“Neat as ever.”

Was it because I was neat? Of course not, it was because I need this money.

“I will be leaving now”

After slinging the bag over my shoulder I went up the mountain.

Inside the temple, Koo Chul as well as few other men were waiting.

It seemed as if they were lectured by Ya Chun since their savageness was suppressed.

They filled the bag with one hundred thousand nyang worth of traceless bank notes.

“I don’t need to count them right?”

Koo Chul replied coldly, “You will pay the price for belittling us.”

After making a small smile in response, I left the temple.

You will pay the price for not understanding who you opponent

truly is. No, you will pay the price for living the wrong path in life. Even if they weren't involved with Ma Jung Soo I was going to eliminate them eventually.

While I was going down the mountain I looked around and check my surrounding. After confirming with my ki that no one was around I went inside one of the trails.

Someone was waiting for me there. It was Jung Yeo. He had a bag that was similar to mine but his bag was full of fake bank notes. Except for a few real bank notes on the top the rest were all fake.

This was the real reason why I chose this location. I determined that this was the best place since there were many places to hide someone.

In addition to the hundred thousand nyang from before, I had taken two hundred thousand nyang from the Dark Guild. This was the money that I was going to use to raise my strength. I could use this money to buy elixirs, improve my sword sect, or do something else to increase my strength.

The best part of it was no one knew that I was the owner of this much money.

After exchanging the bag with Jung Yeo I went down the mountain.

At the bottom of the mountain Ma Jung Soo greeted me with a

delightful expression. He was happy after seeing the bank notes inside the bag.

“Please continue serving me in the future.”

“Of course”

I laughed with him. If it was discovered that the money was fake all the blame will be placed on the Dark Guild. He would have never expected that I had switched the money.

Now, I was going to finish everything.

Even though I am not going to consider his wrongdoing from the past. He committed enough crimes against me. He mocked my father, and tried to take another man's woman. He stole money from the poor, and abused the weak, all in the name of the Heavenly Dao Gate.

I felt that it was time.

Time to eliminate the problem at the root.

Chapter 52: There Is No Such Thing As Retreat (2)

Ma Jung Soo put the bag of money inside the vault.

Since he was able to achieve something that he never thought he could achieve, the grin on his face remained.

After calling the woman, he reported to her about the money that he borrowed. He made it sound like he was the one who got the money, “You should have seen their fearful expression.”

I was outside listening to him telling his story.

How can someone be this shameless? Additionally, he said it knowing that I was listening from the outside.

“You must report all this to him! Understood?”

After listening to his story the woman left the room giving me a glance.

Her glance was inquisitorial. Questioning whether all this was my doing.

Since she had observed him for a long period of time, she knew that Ma Jung Soo wasn't a person who could display such bravery.

Although I didn't reply, she knew what I was implying.

I became very doubtful watching her leave. Was she really sent by Ma Bong Gi? No matter how low in the ranking Ma Jung Soo was to the successor's seat, how could she react in such a way toward one of her master's children?

There was a possibility that she was emotionless due to the fact that she was raised like an assassin.

But there was also a possibility that she acted like this due to the fact that she wasn't raised by Ma Bong Gi. Then who did? And why did Ma Bong Gi agree to let such a person watch and observe his descendants?

"Warrior Kal, please enter."

"Yes sir."

As I entered the room he spoke to me with a big smile on his face, "I took some of your credit warrior Kal, it's alright, right?"

"Of course sir."

"Haha, I knew that you were sensible."

I gave a fake smile as an answer to his empty compliment.

“I have a question sir?”

“What is it?”

“Do other successors have people similar to that woman?”

Ma Jung Soo nodded, “That is what I heard.”

“Are they all women?”

“I heard some were women while other men. But why are you asking?”

“To help you achieve greater things, these are the small things that I must know.”

This was my plan to extort as much information I could from him before killing him.

Not knowing my true intent Ma Jung Soo just smiled.

“How did your father become the Mengju? Was it through years of planning?”

“That’s... of course!”

He didn't answer this question immediately meaning that he also didn't know about it.

Since Ma Bong Gi had over twenty children, why would he care for all of them?

“Why are you asking this?”

“Because just a moment ago I was picturing you sitting on the Mengju's chair.”

“Me? Sitting on the Mengju's chair? That is unlikely to happen.”

“It's not completely unlikely. You still have the chance to become the Mengju.”

“If you help me it might be a possibility.”

“Since we are talking about it, who do you think is your greatest competitor?”

“Most likely it would be Ma Chul Goon.”

Out of the twenty-two sons that Ma Bong Gi had, Ma Chul Goon was his fifth son who was currently holding the position of temporary master of Heavenly Dao Gate.

Although I had never seen Ma Chul Goon, I heard that he was pretty smart, clear headed and had a good personality unlike the rest of his brothers.

“The next person is?”

“Ma Ryung In is very cunning, Ma Yang Hwa is very evil. Ma Koong Tae is strong but ignorant, Ma Sung Hoo is still very young.”

Since this was an evaluation coming from Ma Jung Soo so I didn't know how they truly were as I had never met them. But it seems that they can't be worse than Ma Jung Soo.

Ma Chul Goon, Ma Ryung In, Ma Yang Hwa, Ma Koong Tae, Ma Sung Hoo, Ma Jung Soo. These six were the ones who were currently struggling for the seat of the successor.

“Out of these five, someone is trying to hinder my progress.”

Ma Jung Soo held deep hatred against these five.

“Don't you think that they are doing this because they think that you are greatest threat to them?”

My words were like honey to Ma Jung Soo's ears, making his face brighter by the minute.

I said with a truthful expression, “I will do everything that I can to help you sir.”

“I will trust you warrior Kal.”

Ma Jung Soo said something I would have never imagined, “Ah, can you go to Jae Nam with me.”

“To Jae Nam?”

“Yes, I am only telling you this but I had some trouble there. Due to the fact that San Dong Merchant was unable to provide the money, the contract to build the Martial Arts School became void.”

“So, such a thing happened.”

“Yes so, I decided to take the money over there personally. To finish this contract as soon as possible.”

He could have requested someone from their side some to come here, but that would have taken some time and there was no guarantee that they would agree to come here since there were rumors that he was the one who canceled the deal. They could make some sort of excuse to not come here.

“Yes, I plan on going there personally.”

Then I said in a low voice, “But it is dangerous to travel with so

much money.”

“I’m only going to take how much I need to make the deposit. If you and that woman come with me, that would be plenty as an escort.”

Even though he hated that woman, what he hated more was getting robbed. So he thought that this was the best option.

There was a safer way to transfer the money. Which was to place it in a bank and withdraw it at Jae Nam. But that would take at least ten days and he didn’t have the time to wait that long.

“I think it would be safe if your escort is only us.”

“So you trust her?”

“How could I trust her? Didn’t you personally warn me to be wary of her? Isn’t having two hands better than one?”

“We will leave early in the morning. So be prepared.”

“Yes.”

I wanted to eliminate him tonight but decided not to. Since I had the opportunity to find out more about that woman’s identity when we get to Jae Nam, I was going to keep him alive for a few more days.

Don't be too happy that I am keeping you alive for a few more days. It's just that your luck is terrible. You will soon feel my wrath starting with the fake money.

The next day a carriage pulls in front of the manor.

Next to me sat the woman, since she couldn't refuse Ma Jung Soo's order to escort him.

She was silent through most of the way. Since she wasn't one to talk I didn't even start a conversation with her.

I was able to see her hand clearer than ever. It was unlike other women's hands. It was rough and full of callus. Which showed that she was a practitioner of the fist art.

And a very seasoned expert at that.

On top of that she also had numerous scars. One of her scars ran from her left hand all the way up to her arm. I couldn't properly see the rest of her scars or where it ended since it was covered

by her clothes, but was sure that she had more.

Sensing that my attention was on her hand, she covered that scar

with her other hand.

Although I wanted to ask I didn't since it might have been rude.

“Have you mastered the Fist Art?”

A few moments later she replied, “Yes”

“Of all the arts that exist why have you mastered the fist art?”

Fist Arts were a martial art that very few female chose because of their lack of strength and they didn't want to mar their appearance.

“I... didn't have a choice.”

The conversation was put on hold for a bit.

This meant that she was trained by some organization since her childhood.

“At one point I favored the fist art as well, because I think men should fight with their fists.”

This was true since I mastered many different types of martial arts beside Sword Arts like the Fist Arts, the Spear Arts and other arts.

But among them I particularly favored the Fist Arts after my Sword Arts. This was due to my mastery of Fist of the Peerless Wind God art.

This Fist Art was created by the previous fight king and it was preserved in the Murim Headquarter Library.

It was hard to master and on top of that this was the period when I was still roaming the Central Plain crushing my opponents with my Ashura Soul Chasing Art, so I had only scratched the surface and did not dedicate that much time trying to learn from it.

“If I hadn’t learned the sword art I would have mastered the fist art.”

Then she said, “That’s just an excuse.”

When I turned to look at her she continued, “Just an excuse since you didn’t want to learn it.”

“While you must have dexterity to learn sword art, don’t you become stiff after learning the fist art?

Unless I learn the throwing art these two arts, the fist art and sword art, do not complement each other.”

“Who said that?”

I paused for a second. What I said earlier was information that most experts knew. Since she was an expert she should have heard of something like this before.

“Have you ever asked the Strongest Under Heaven about this?”

“No”

Hey, look here. Mysterious lady. These are the words that are coming straight out of the Strongest Under Heaven’s mouth.

Then she continued, “I believe, the Strongest Under Heaven would never say such a thing. He would never be bounded by these beliefs.”

Something shook my heart.

‘The Strongest Under Heaven would never be bounded by these beliefs’. If it was me from before, after hearing something like this I would have replied, ‘Hey, look here just because I am the Strongest Under Heaven doesn’t make me any different from you. It’s just that I have master thousands of martial arts which have allowed me to reach this place.’

But after hearing what she said, I thought of something that I had never thought of before.

Shouldn't the strongest under heaven be different?

Even though some things were passed down through traditions, shouldn't the Strongest Under Heaven decipher them differently and apply them in a different manner? Because he was the Strongest Under Heaven? The strongest person under heaven.

Couldn't he prove the whole world wrong?

I never experimented with it before. I never experimented whether sword arts were compatible with fist arts or if they were truly incompatible with.

If I displayed the sword arts along with the fist arts what sort of beautiful combination would it give birth to?

Shouldn't I have learned martial art with this sort of mindset? Since I saw martial arts with limitations and boundaries, once I remove those boundaries, wouldn't I be able to find the truth, the Spirit-Sword?

Since I was stuck in my beliefs I was unable to move past that limitation.

When I got back to my senses, I saw that she was driving the carriage. She was driving the carriage after seeing me fall into deep and profound thoughts.

I set out on this journey to discover her true identity, but it

seemed that this experience with her allowed me to see many different things. Although this was a small insight, this was all I needed to

break through the threshold.

As I was about to thank her the carriage got out of the main road.

“Ahh!” She showed some signs of amazement for the first time in this journey. On top of the mountain were beautiful autumn leaves changing their color. It was truly a beautiful sight. Her reaction surprised me since I thought she was emotionless.

Then I said to her, “Thank you.”

She made a light grin. It seemed that she was not used to being thanked. Then she focused her sight back towards the mountain admiring the view.

How long did we ride for?

Few travelers who were on horseback came towards our side.

I was surprised to see the lead person. It was Song Woo Kyung, and beside him was Song Hwa Rin. And the people who were around them were all martial artists of the Song Clan. It seemed

that they were coming back from some sort of mission.

Since I saw them in this unexpected place I was truly surprised. But of course, they wouldn't know my thoughts since I was wearing a face-alteration mask.

As we drove past them Ma Jung Soo said to me, "Stop the carriage."

I stopped the carriage then he stuck his head out the window and said loudly, "Song Gaju-nim!"

Song Woo Kyung stopped his horse and turned his horse around.

"Oh! Lord Ma!"

The reason why Ma Jung Soo stopped the carriage wasn't because of Song Woo Kyung, it was because of the young lady who was beside him.

Following Song Woo Kyung's lead, Song Hwa Rin as well as their guards got off their horse.

"This is my daughter Song Hwa Rin. Show your respect, he is Lord Ma of Heavenly Dao Gate."

Song Hwa Rin greeted Ma Jung Soo, "This is our first meeting, I am called Song Hwa Rin."

“Oh, so you were someone this beautiful. My heart is beating nonstop.”

Ma Jung Soo might have said it jokingly but I knew he truly meant it because he couldn't take his eyes off Song Hwa Rin.

Feeling awkward, Song Hwa Rin gave him a light smile and said, “But I am sorry sir, I have a fiancé.”

“I heard, isn't he the rascal son of the Byuk Clan? I am sorry.”

Although he said it on purpose, he apologized as if he had made a mistake.

I knew his true nature. He was someone who would turn tail when faced with a stronger opponent, but if he believed he was superior than that person he acted without shame. He was weak against the strong, while strong against the weak.

“It may be rude but, I heard that you requested a divorce.”

Then Song Hwa Rin replied with a smile, “You know how fickle a woman's mind is.”

“Does that mean you are not going to divorce him?”

“All I can tell you about Byuk Lee Dan is he is greater than how

he is portrayed in Kang Ho.”

“Oh, you feel that way about him. He must have something that others don’t see.”

You son of a, since you can’t talk bad about me you are trying all sorts of things now...

Song Hwa Rin continued, “I think you also have something that is not known to the public.”

“What do you mean by that?”

Song Hwa Rin just continued smiling.

Ma Jung Soo and I both knew the meaning of this smile. Although she heard that Ma Jung Soo was an amazing person, seeing him in person made her realize that he was lacking in many ways.

She took a page of his book.

If she said something like that when I am around I would have appreciated it less. But seeing her act this way behind my back I was thankful.

The mysterious woman said to me, “So you are also the same.”

“What?”

She just turned her head again, “You can’t take your eyes off that miss.”

“That’s...”

Since I couldn’t tell her my relation with Song Hwa Rin I stopped.

After sensing the solemnness in the atmosphere Song Woo Kyung quickly departed after saying his farewells, “We must be off since we still have things to do. Next time I will invite you to our house formally.”

“Yes, let’s do that.”

Song Woo Kyung’s party quickly departed the other way.

“B*tch! You dare mock me!”

Listening to him scream I smiled. How does it feel to be mocked?

Hahaha. Good job Hwa Rin-ah.

We raised our speed as well. Soon Ma Jung Soo’s words became muffled under the noise of the wind.

Chapter 53: There Is No Such Thing As Retreat (3)

As soon as we arrived at Jae Nam, we went to finalize the contract with a man named Do Jong.

Do Jong was a famous carpenter who was said to be the best carpenter in Jae Nam.

“I never expected that young master Ma would come here personally.”

Although he had dealt with people like this his entire life, this was the first time that he was so nervous. He was nervous due to the fact that he canceled the previous agreement and Ma Jung Soo might have come for his revenge.

Do Jong said, “It seems that there were false rumors going around. I am sorry, the construction workers are paid daily so if we don’t go by the schedule...”

Ma Jung Soo raised his hand and said, “I did not come here to hear your excuses.”

Hearing Ma Jung Soo’s cold words, Doo Jong shut his mouth. He was nervous since he knew what kind of person Ma Jung Soo was, and on top of that there was a rumor going around. So he wasn’t in the best position.

Ma Jung Soo put the bag on the counter, “Here is the money for construction. I added an additional ten thousand nyang so that you can work without hitch.”

“We are...”

Doo Jong couldn't finish his sentence since Ma Jung Soo was giving him a death stare.

So he said with a big sigh, “Alright, we will do our best.”

He decided that although he might have some losses elsewhere, he had to postpone them for this project. Doo Jong truly didn't want to take up this contract.

“Hahaha, you made a great decision.”

“We should make a contract first. Please wait a little bit”, Do Jong then sent someone to get a contract.

He left the place as well. It seemed that he went to the nearest bank to deposit the money. Twenty thousand nyang was a pretty big sum of money since it had to cover for most of the construction fees.

Ma Jung Soo had already read the contract and signed it. He had completely different look than when he signed the contract at the Dark Guild, today he was actually smiling.

After some time, Doo Jong returned, but his face was dark.

“Have you returned?”

Doo Jong replied to Ma Jung Soo in a careful manner, “I think there has been a mistake.”

“What do you mean?”

“The banknotes that you gave me... are fake”

“What?”

Ma Jung Soo stood up looking surprised.

I replied with a surprised expression, “That is impossible!”

Doo Jong looked between me and Ma Jung Soo and said, “Is it something that you really don’t know about?”

I raised my voice and said, “Do you know who he is. Do you think he would really use some fake money? And you think he is someone who is foolish enough to do something that would be found out so easily? What you are doing right now is practically not giving Heavenly Dao Gate any face.”

Doo Jong was afraid that they had come here to cause a scene with the fake money because he had canceled the first contract. However, after finding out that they didn't know what was going on he said in a less nervous voice "That is what I thought. Please come with me to confirm it"

So we followed him.

The closest bank confirmed that the money was fake. Besides two thousand nyang the rest of the eighteen thousand nyang were all fake. The two thousand nyang was the money that I put in there since I was afraid that he might check it.

Ma Jung Soo said in an angry tone, "Have you exchanged it behind our back?!"

"Ohh no! How could I dare? I could never do something like that." Dong Joo bowed down on the spot.

I told Ma Jung Soo, "How could he have planned something like this? He didn't even know that we were coming here."

Then with his cold glare, he stared at me.

"Why are you looking at me with that sort of look? Are you doubting me?"

I stared back at Ma Jung Soo pridefully and shamelessly. With that Ma Jung Soo's suspicion of me disappeared. He thought that

my action was too proud to have done something like this since it would be discovered as soon as we got to Jae Nam.

“Could those punks from the Dark Guild have swindled us?”

“That’s it sir.”

“It was going to be found out right away. Yet they dare swindle me!”

“It couldn’t only be them. There must also be some other successor or successors who are trying to hinder your progress.”

“Ah! That’s it, those sons of b*tches! They are hindering me to the end!”

Ma Jung Soo believed that the person who killed Si Gon was working together with the Dark Guild.

He couldn’t hold back his anger and screamed, “Ahhhhh!”

To avoid any blame going to Doo Jong, I quickly said to Ma Jung Soo, “If we don’t take care of this we might be in a position where we must pay back a hundred thousand nyang without even using it.”

“What!?”

“Don’t you remember sir? We signed a contract with them as well. So I think we should return immediately and count the rest of the money. Just in case, we might have to get to the bottom of it.”

We quickly returned to the Yang Clan manor. We opened the vault and checked the rest of the money; however, it was all fake.

Ma Jung Soo broke another table, “I cannot forgive those bastards! I will kill every single one of those bastards from the San Dong Merchants and Dark Guild live!”

“Of course you must!”

“I am going to bring everyone who is willing to help me from the Clan. I don’t care about the successor test now!”

The focal point of his rage was due to the thought of being disregarded and being given no face by others.

I wanted to tell him that this was karma for how he lived disregarding everyone else around him. Now it was returning to him and he was being disregarded.

Of course even if I told him, he wouldn’t listen.

“Bring some alcohol! Hurry!”

I quickly brought a couple of bottles of alcohol.

“Where is that bitch? Where did she go!”

“I didn’t see her today sir.”

“Hmph! F*cking rat! She is like a f*cking ghost!”

Ma Jung Soo was chugging down the alcohol from the bottle.

I was able to escape the room by telling him that I would bring some appetizers.

She was outside in the corridor. When I went out to get the alcohol I saw her outside.

“Why didn’t you tell him that I was outside?”

“Because... as you can see his condition isn’t too good.”

She had a thankful look in her eyes.

I didn’t need her thanks since she enlightened me on the way to Jae Nam, this was just a repayment for her word.

That night.

Ma Jung Soo who was drunk on alcohol went out for a walk.

The place that he was heading to was the Song Clan Manor. He lusted after Song Hwa Rin after he got drunk. Once he started thinking about her his lust for her was insatiable. Her beautiful looks wouldn't leave his head so made up his mind to do something.. He didn't care about the consequences that might follow his actions.

At this rate, it was guaranteed that he would fail the successor test. Since he couldn't be the next successor, he was either going to die or live a terrible life.

So he made up his mind to do something that he shouldn't do. Of course, he made a plan. Even if he was the descendant of the Heavenly Dao Gate, he would still be punished for harming the heir of the Song Clan.

He was going to enter her room wearing a mask. Then he was going to feed her the anesthesia that he always carried. It was made into a fine powder so that all he had to do was sprinkle some on her when she was sleeping.

He revealed the reason why he was going to do this, "This b*tch!

I told you I was going to make you regret your words.”

His reason for doing this was because of the grudge that held when he met her on his way to Jae Nam.

“B*tch! Let’s see how things go after tonight!”

As he hastened his pace there someone was on his path.

“Who are you?”

Ma Jung Soo didn’t know who the other person was.

That was to be expected since I was wearing a new face-alteration mask.

I told him coldly, “There are some things in Kang Ho that you shouldn’t have touched.”

What I truly meant by this was, he should have never touched my father, Song Hwa Rin, the Kang Ho-in of San Dong as well as others who had to suffer due to Ma Jung Soo.

However he would only think of it as, “There is no one who can survive after touching the money of the Dark Guild”

I knew that the woman was observing us from a distance.

“Son of a b*tch! As if giving us the fake bank wasn’t enough! You dare to threaten me?! Hey punk you came at a great time!”

Ma Jung Soo’s killing intent raised while he drew his sword. He was truly an expert. Regardless of being drunk, being able to show off that much ki at such a young age was truly amazing.

This showed how much resources one could get just by being in one of the five major clans. However that wasn’t enough to face me.

I could have killed him quickly but since there were other eyes watching us I didn’t.

Clang Clang Clang Clang Clang!

Our fight had come to a stalemate. Since I was hiding my Ashura sword art and the Brightmoon sword art, I fought him using the sword skills that were common amongst the bandits and mercenaries.

It was a technique with no extravagance, designed only to kill others.

After having exchanged around fifty blows, I determined that it was about time. I put my true speed and strength into the sword.

When the two swords exchanged blow once more...

Ma Jung Soo's sword pierced the empty space, but my sword pierced his chest.

Stabbbb!

“Uahhhhhhh!”

He opened his eyes wide and stared down at his chest. The pain was only secondary to him. He was afraid. Afraid of death. He was always the one who ordered others to their death, this was his first time being the one facing death.

“...what...is...this?”

I twisted the blade mercilessly.

“Ahhhh!”

Ma Jung Soo gave another painful scream then said, “It hurts! Please stop!”

There were tears in his eyes. If they were tears of repentance I might have finished him painlessly, but they were tears of fear and anger.

“Please...I don’t want to die like this...”

I wanted to say, ‘there is no need for you to think that it is unfair. I will finish this in a decent way.’

He might have wanted to say something along the lines of ‘I was born from a concubine and lived a hard life. To survive I had to turn into a monster.’

So what, not everyone will turn into a monster. It was just an excuse. An excuse for his actions and personality.

Slash!

Stab!

Slash!

Stab!

I slash and stabbed him multiple times. Although he died after my second stab I just kept stabbing him. Because this was the way of the mercenaries and bandits.

Ma Jung Soo fell down and there was a puddle of blood.

As I put the sword back into my sheath and turned around, I was

able to see the women looking at us from atop a tree.

Her cold and expressionless stare.

She was truly strong. She could have even been stronger than Si Gon, but she didn't make a move. If she had the thought to, she could have intervened during my fight with Ma Jung Soo.

I stared at her coldly and warned her, "If you touch us you will die."

After giving her the warning I left the premise.

She didn't follow me.

It was as I expected, she was just there to observe. But I saw that she was smiling while carrying Ma Jung Soo's corpse.

I quickly went back to my room to change my clothes and put on the original face-alteration mask. It was because I had a feeling that she would visit my room before she was going to leave.

As expected, she came to see me.

Smack.

A small rock hit the window.

When I opened the window I saw her standing outside, it seems that she had put the body somewhere outside.

Was she here because she was about to leave? Or was it because of some other motive?

She looked at me with a complicated expression.

I could have been the first person in her life that she had a proper conversation with.

She didn't say whether she was leaving nor about the death of Ma Jung Soo. Instead, she said "My name is ... Number Seven."

This was the moment that she revealed that she was part of a secret organization.

Saying her name was not an easy thing for her.

My chest was murky and depressed, but I didn't show any emotion and replied with a smile, "It's a good name."

Whether her name truly was 'Number Seven' I would never be able to discover. My name, Kal Pyo, was fake, and this face was also fake. Although this meeting with her was ambiguous, it showed how much she had changed.

From her mouth, I could see that she was trying to say something but she couldn't. So she turned around without any farewell.

“Wait.”

She stopped her steps.

“Why were you looking into the pond?”

She turned around and told me, “I heard that lotus flowers bloom inside a muddy pond. I just wanted to know if that was true.”

The thing that she was looking at wasn't the fish nor the reflection on the pond but it was the lotus flower.

“That is what I have heard as well.”

“So it truly is true.”

She had a smile on her face. This was the first time that I saw her this calm and happy.

After our conversation, she disappeared into the darkness.

Would we be able to meet again?

I would never know.

Even if we won't be able to see each other again, I will always remember her name. Number Seven.

Then I looked up towards the moon.

This was when I saw Jung Yeo look at me carefully. I smiled at his direction.

Jung Bangju you have done well.

With this, the storm that Ma Jung Soo brought with him had finally ended.

However I knew that compared to the real typhoon, Ma Jung Soo was just a light shower.

I needed to be stronger.

Since I will have to face more dangerous and more vicious men in the future.

Chapter 54: Where Did This Fortuitous Encounter Come From? (1)

Number Seven walked through a corridor resembling a maze.

Forward, side, back, side, forward, side. It was a corridor that even a smart person would have a hard time getting through on their first try. After some time, when she got out of the maze there was a long and straight corridor waiting for her. At the end of the corridor was a door that was decorated in gray.

When she entered the room there was a single man with his back facing her inside. The room had no window, as if it was a basement. The man was staring at a picture where a window should have been.

It was a dynamic picture of a wave crashing into the rocks along the shore causing foam and bubbles. It was truly an antithesis to the pent-up room.

“Ma Jung Soo is dead”

It was raining outside, as if it was an omen.

The man’s expression was unchanged, “How?”

Although Ma Jung Soo died, he wasn’t going to report it to Ma Bong GI nor was he going to report it the Murim Alliance either.

“He died because of the Dark Guild of San Dong.”

“Did you verify?”

“Yes, I verified with my own eyes. Here is the detailed report.”

She laid her report down on the table. But the man didn't move his sight from the picture.

“Whenever I see this picture this is what always comes to my mind. Did the artist draw this picture while looking at the ocean, or did he draw it from his imagination? What do you think?”

“I... don't know.”

Finally when the man turned around, he looked like he was in his thirties. Contrary to the atmosphere when he was looking at the painting, his atmosphere completely turned cold.

He was the leader of this organization, Number One. He was the only person who knew how many members were in this organization and the only source to the boss of the organization.

Number One slowly read the report.

“The Old Man Flower Fan and Si Gon who went with you went missing? And it seems like it is the doing of another successor?”

“Yes, that’s what I believe.”

Number One said all this while still staring at the report, “Stand by until further instruction.”

“Yes”

As she was about to leave the room, Number One called her, “Number Seven.”

“Yes”

Number One’s tone became lighter, “Good job”

But Number Seven was still emotionless, “Thank You”

When she left the room, Number One finished reading the report. Then he put the report back on the table and went back to staring at the picture.

Three hours after the report was made, the report got to the Murim Mengju, Ma Bong Gi.

The person who reported was the leader of the Moonlight Sect, Joo Chul Ryong.

“This report just came in sir. Unfortunately sir, your son, Ma Jung Soo has died.”

Even though he heard the news about the death of his son, Ma Bong Gi didn't show any emotion.

“Who killed him?”

“It seems like one of the other successors.”

Joo Chul Ryong didn't report anything about the Dark Guild or about San Dong Merchants. Either he altered the information or he didn't receive information about it since no one knew how many people it went through after it left Number One's hand.

“It seems like we need to look into it. Since we cannot send someone from the Alliance I think you must send someone from your Clan.”

Ma Bong Gi nodded, “I will take care of it. Now, the next report.”

With that, the conversation about the death of Ma Jung Soo ended. If Ma Jung Soo saw this from the depth of hell he would be cursing and raging.

“Due to this, it seems that Kang Ho isn't in a great state. Please bring back the successors that you sent out.”

“There is no need for that,” Ma Bong Gi refused his request.

“Even if my successors might object to it, I will send some men. I am sure you are more capable than me in this area. I am giving them this much opportunity, at least they should be respectful of it.”

“You cannot ignore the public opinion.”

“You should stop ignoring me first.”

Joo Chul Ryong pretended that he didn’t hear the last statement and went on, “There are some things the Murim-In expect out of the Mengju.”

“As you know, I am not that sort of a person.”

“Then why don’t you become one starting now.”

The two of them were engaged in a battle of will.

“I will ask you a question.”

“Yes”

“Why did you choose me?”

If it wasn't for Joo Chul Ryong of the Moonlight Sect, one of the three pillar sects of the Alliance Ma Bong Gi would never have been the Mengju.

“I have respect for you.”

“Don't give me that shit and tell me your real reason.”

“I don't have other reason.”

“Who is the one behind you.”

“There is no one.”

Laughing, Ma Bong Gi grabbed the chair's handle and shifted his weight to the front. Ma Bong Gi might have believed Joo Chul Ryong if he didn't say it with an atmosphere, but he knew that it was fake. Ma Bong Gi was someone who had experienced many things in life and he knew what sort of person he was.

There was someone behind him. Even though he was appointed as the Mengju for over half a year he didn't know how that person looked like or what he wanted. Since he made Ma Bong Gi into a mengju it wasn't unlikely that he would come demanding something.

“Let us stop here.”

“Then take your leave.”

Joo Chul Ryong slowly left the place.

Ma Bong Gi was closely staring at Joo Chul Ryong as he left.

“If you see me as a fool, and think that you can use me that easily... then you have made a grave mistake.”

The rumor about Ma Jung Soo started spreading from San Dong to other cities.

It was about how Ma Jung Soo made an agreement with the San Dong merchants, but during that process he stole money from the San Dong Merchants as they were borrowing money from the Dark Guild. The news about his death didn't spread. But it was just told that he left, and his plan for making a martial arts school went down the gutters.

Of course, all these rumors were created by me.

I was very careful while spreading these rumors, but these rumors spread like a wildfire after leaking it. Soon the rumors spread to other parts of Kang Ho. Then, another rumor started spreading about how the Heavenly Dao Gate was trying to influence the Kang Ho.

Finally, people's resentment for Ma Bong Gi erupted.

The Murim Alliance believed everything settles down through time, so they didn't make a move.

San Dong finally found its peace once more, but there were two organization that didn't. They were the San Dong Merchants and the San Dong Dark Guild. The Dark Guild left San Dong after hearing what happened to Ma Jung Soo, and San Dong Merchants were discriminated against because of their dealings with the Dark Guild coming to light.

In the end however, the ultimate victor was me.

I was able to obtain two hundred thousand nyang thought this event.

It was enough money to expand the strength of our sect tenfold, but I planned to build to up slowly. So, I would increase the number of our sect in spring as planned, Still adding only forty members as planned..

Due to the recent events, the Heavenly Dao Gate or Murim Alliance might start their investigation and I didn't want to attract their attention too much.

The Sword Sect was running smoothly under the instruction of Kwan He. It was to the degree where I could entrust him as the

chief of the sects that I planned on creating.

Even so, I was going to let them mature and get stronger until next spring. If the chief was well training additional members will be easy. The moment that these twenty become the leader of their own sect is when I will have become a major power with over four hundred men.

Kwang Du was also diligently training. He had truly improved after I fed him the profound medicine, raising the energy in his dantian by eight years. With that he gained a lot of self-confidence.

“It’s hard to see your face these days young master.”

“I was busy.”

“You should have taken me.”

“Should I have?” I questioned him with my eyes wide open.

“...was it dangerous?”

I told him with a serious face, “There were crazy people with swords everywhere, some were even shooting out their weapons from their hand, and curses were the norm. Hundreds of thousands of Nyangs were exchanged, and there was a lot of backstabbing...”

Kwang Du put his hands in his ears, “Please! Stop!”

“I will take you next time. I will show you how Kang Ho really is. I think it’s time.”

“No, I think I still have ways to go. I like the peaceful Kang Ho where you receive medicine and weapon as presents. That’s the kind of Kang Ho I want to live in.”

“Ho ho”

“Please don’t laugh like that!”

It was fun teasing Kwang Du like this. It had been a while since I last teased him like this. It felt as if joking around with him like this was taking away my tension that I had built up taking down Ma Jung Soo.

“But where are you doing? You even have a bag?”

Kwang Du asked me after seeing the bag in my back.

I told him with a cold expression, “What? You want to go with me?”

“What! Is the thing that you are carrying... a body?”

Kwang Du ran away from me and waved his hand at me.

After giving him a laugh I left the house.

What I had inside the bag wasn't a corpse but what the corpse had given me as a gift.

With the two hundred thousand nyang I went to the Shrouded City Merchants.

I was planning on buying some cultivation medicine.

Why was I so focused on raising my ki?

This was because it was the fastest way to get stronger. Usually if people took different types of cultivation medicine it would hinder their progress. There was a limit on how much money can give you when it comes to cultivation medicine since it will be less and less effective the more ki that you have.

Fortunately, I was practicing the best cultivation technique, the Divine Protection Techniques which would bring out the maximum potential of medicine. However even I couldn't change the fact the effect of it will go down as my dantian gets bigger. Still, I didn't even have sixty years' worth of energy; thus, I believed that I won't have too much effect in my cultivation.

This was what I realized after taking down Ma Jung Soo. Something was happening in the Murim that I didn't know about.

Thus, I decided that I must get stronger as soon as possible.

I had perfectly mastered the first three stances of my Ashura Sword Arts. I never forgot to train my body in the morning. The thing I was lacking the most in was my ki.

I must quickly reach the sixty years point so that I could use the fourth stance of the Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art.

For this, I needed to find decent medicine at the Shrouded City Merchants.

I met with the same old man as before. I altered my face again as usual.

But the old man said with a disappointed face, "We are out of medicine today."

"I see."

The day that I had the most money was the day that they ran out of the cultivation medicine.

I was disappointed but I couldn't do anything since it was like what that old man said, 'the owner of the elixir already exists.'

“I believe the other branches don’t have any either. The production of Cultivation Medicine has dwindled. We might not even be able to find one at all this year.”

“Oh well”

“Since you are here, why don’t you look at our other merchandise?”

“Good idea sir.”

It wasn’t a bad idea to look at some of the merchandise that they might have.

I followed the old man and exited the room. After crossing the garden we arrived at a large room with many displayed objects. This room was as big as the Yang Clan’s banquet hall.

There were all sorts of merchandise on display here, which were divided into two general types. One type of merchandise was enclosed in a metal cage while the other type wasn’t. I could tell that the metal cage wasn’t an ordinary steel. Although it may not be able to withstand my attack, it was enough to hold off ordinary attackers.

In the prime of my previous life, there was nothing that I couldn’t cut down. I remember when I fought against the Black Dragon of the Thirteen Demons Alliance. He ran into a secret cave

protected by an Adamantine door. When I showed my sword light he laughed at me even more. However, when my sword light was able to slowly cut down on his door, others should have seen the look on his face. In the end, he couldn't escape and died at my hand.

The old man took me to where some of the swords were displayed.

“Looking at your sword, it seems pretty old. You should buy a new one.”

Haha.

I wanted to laugh out loud.

He was saying that since he doesn't know what sort of sword this is. If I told him that this was the Heavenly Origin's Sword, he would have been pleasantly surprised.

He pointed at one of the swords that were encaged.

“That sword is the Mystical Typhoon Sword. The one that was personally used by the Lord Typhoon.”

I knew about that sword. It was a sword that I had fought against when I was still young. I won against him under a minute. After that we exchanged letters every so often. But then he stopped sending me letters.

Seeing his sword here it must mean that he was dead.

Senior, I hope that you went to a better place.

I prayed for him in my heart.

“How much is it?”

“Ninety thousand nyang.”

“Ninety thousand nyang?”

I was surprised. It was more than I expected.

“It was the personal blade of Lord Typhoon.”

“So that’s how it is.”

If that sword cost that much, how much would these Heavenly Origins Sword cost? The sword much better and was the personal sword of the previous Mengju. A few hundred thousand nyang wouldn’t be enough. Not that I thought of selling it, but since I customized it a bit it's worth might have gone down a bit.

If I found the King Shura’s Divine Sword now, that sword would be priceless.

Besides the Mystical Typhoon sword, there were a few other swords that caught my attention. A few of them were a level above it and few were below. However they would only cost thirty to fifty thousand nyang.

It would be difficult, but I would be able to cut down most of the swords that were below the Mystical Typhoon sword level. After looking at the swords I looked at other weapons. Staff, spear, glove, there were many different things on display here. The things that I wanted to buy were too expensive. For example, the hidden armor that I wanted to buy was over a hundred thousand nyang. Of course, it was made of a material that wouldn't be cut by a sword that easily but it was too much for my current financial situation.

After looking at all the encaged merchandise I went to look at the cheaper ones.

Chapter 55: Where Did This Fortuitous Encounter Come From? (2)

The weapons that were displayed on the outside were stacked in the hundreds by their respective categories. The swords were all in one pile, shields were in another. They were all stacked neatly by different classes and groups.

I picked out one that looked decent from the pile. I wanted to give this to Kwang Du, “How much is this?”

“Oh! You have good eyes for these things.” The old manager knew that the sword that I had just picked up was the best sword that they could offer.

“Six thousand nyang. This weapon should be inside the cage.”

“It seems that the hilt and the sheath received some damage.”

“Good eyes. That’s the reason why we had to put it outside.”

If it wasn’t damaged they could have sold it for at least ten thousand nyang.

Although this sword wasn’t a divine sword, it was still one of the best regular swords that I had seen in this life. It was also the best sword for Kwang Du at the moment since I didn’t know if he would be able to control a divine class sword yet.

“I’ll buy this.”

“A wise choice.”

Now I picked a sword for Kwan He. It was another good sword that had some defects in it. This one was worth four thousand nyang.

“Are you the son of a blacksmith?”

Since it was difficult to explain to him, I just nodded.

“So it was like that! You certainly know how to choose a weapon.”

After saying that he looked at the sword that I had on my hip one more time. It seemed that he regretted what he said before. He had the look on his face of wanting me to show him the Heavenly Origin Sword, but I didn’t have any thoughts of showing him the Heavenly Origin Sword.

As I was about to leave after buying two swords, something caught my eyes.

“What is that?”

There was something that was standing up which caught my

attention. As I approached it to have a closer look, there was a small figure of a martial artist that was about the size of my fist. Since it was made of wood it looked old, and almost disfigured. As there were a few figures that had some disfiguration it caught my attention.

Each figure had a different pose. Some figures were striking with their hands, while others kicked their legs. Some were defending their back while others were defending their torso.

There weren't any figures that had any weapons. Meaning that these were some sort of weaponless techniques. However in contrast to most other weaponless techniques, these figures were using all parts of their bodies..

Counting all of the figures, there were thirty-three of them in total.

“Are you selling these as well?”

“Of course. That's why it is here.”

“How much are they?”

“I won't sell them individually. All of them together are worth two thousand nyang.”

I was surprised so I asked the old manager again.

“These are one of a kind. The other shops don’t have this. I have worked at the Shrouded City Merchant Guild for a long time but this was my first time seeing such things.”

“I will buy it”

“For real? There wasn’t anyone who was willing to buy them for two thousand nyang,” The old man said with a surprise.

He sold divine swords and cultivation medicines for tens of thousand of nyang, but that was expected since they were the most important things for a martial artist. However two thousand nyang for these figures was a large sum.

“There is a start to everything.”

Even though he sold the merchandise he still felt unsatisfied. He whispered in my ear, “I really didn’t want to sell this. Seeing it gave me a good feeling. That’s why I made the price expensive so that others wouldn’t buy it. But it seems that you are going to buy it. I’ll take the two thousand nyang as a compensation.”

This old man misunderstood something. The reason I doubted him was that it was too cheap.

I believed that it was worth much more than that. Maybe five thousand nyang, or maybe even ten thousand nyang. That’s what I determined how much these figures should cost.

If someone were to ask me the reason, I would say it was the poses these figures had. They weren't the normal poses. They weren't created just for show. I wanted to look further into it.

“Now, if I want to sell, I must sell well right?”

He brought an old chest and put the figures inside the chest. Now that I look at it, this chest seems to have been created just for these figures. There were thirty-three compartments just like how there were thirty-three figures.

The old man put the figures inside the chest.

After receiving the chest and the two swords I gave him ten thousand nyang.

“Please come again.”

“I will”

“If you want to sell the figures again I'll refund you the full price for it.”

I said I understood, but I didn't have any plan on doing that.

Although I couldn't find the cultivation medicine that I had come here for, I felt satisfied. I was able to buy swords for Kwan He and

Kwang Du, and I was able to get these figures at a cheap price.

With the rest of the money I went and deposited it at the bank.

It wasn't a small amount of money. It would be enough to buy more cultivation medicine if it became available at the Shrouded City Merchants, or to invest in my sect and the clan. Now that the financial problem has been solved I felt rather relieved. Now we could enjoy our meals without worrying what would be on our plates tomorrow.

With that feeling, I went back home.

I was also able to influence others with my feelings.

Since I called both Kwang Du and Kwan He to one place, all the members of my Sword Sect were nervous.

I gave the two of them the swords that I had bought for them.

After receiving the sword Kwan He asked, "What sort of sword is this?"

"This is your sword from now on."

"What?" Kwan He's eyes widened. He was moved at what I told him.

“Thank you for all your hard work. I expect much from you in the future.”

“Sect master!”

“It’s a strong sword, so it won’t break that easily. Use it as you see fit.”

“Can I take it out of its sheath?” His voice was shaking.

“Of Course.”

Kwan He took out his sword nervously.

Shiing!

The sound of the sword was different.

“Woaah!” His face was full of amazement, “I have never seen such amazing sword before.”

Of course he would say that. Since he would buy a sword that was worth maybe hundred nyang at most.

But since this was four thousand nyang, how different would this feel compared to his other swords?

“Thank you very much sect master!”

If I gave him something else he wouldn't be this happy. Since Kwan He was so focused on getting stronger he would even cut back on his sleep to train.

Since he was such a straightforward person it was easier to see his excitement.

After Kwan He left, only Kwang Du was next to me. Then I asked him, “Why aren't you that excited?”

“How could I not be excited? Since Chief Kwan looks so happy, I am just calmly standing here. I lost my chance to do so.”

Of course, he wasn't the type that would try to steal the spotlight from others. Although he just yielded to Kwan He, he was just as excited and happy and wanted to take out his sword. This was the sort of person Kwang Du was and this was the reason why I liked him so much.

Finally, Kwang Du took out his blade.

“It looks pretty good.”

I saw the reflection of his face through his sword. It looked as if he was about cry since this sword was incomparable to the sword that I gave him before.

“I think you are not satisfied. Bring it over here. There are few others who could use it.”

As I got closer to him to steal the sword from him, he ran away from me.

“Can’t I make a joke? It’s the best. Wow! This is the best sword in the world!”

His expression was priceless. Now that he had a decent sword, Kwang Du looked like a real martial artist.

“Didn’t you say that the sword that I gave you last time was the best?”

“Isn’t this more expensive?”

“Yeah, by many times.”

“Then this is the best.”

“Hahaha”

After putting his sword away he looked at me. Gratitude and respect filled his eyes.

“Young master, it seems that when you rescued the Kang Ho I must have been there with you.”

“So it seems.”

I just agreed with him but I thought otherwise. ‘I saved the Kang Ho to meet you.’

Laughing, he asked me confidently, “But...my sword is better than Chief Kwan’s right?”

“Who knows.”

“Tell me. How much more expensive was it? Fifty nyang? Hundred?”

Since I didn’t tell him until the end, Kwang Du followed me everywhere I went.

‘Your blade was two thousand nyang more expensive.’ I wanted to tell him, but it was more enjoyable to tease him

That night I entered the cave in the mountain. I had always entered this cave when I wanted to be alone or when I had to do something important. The reason why I entered this cave today was because of the figures.

I took out the figures from the box and placed them on the floor. Seeing the poses of the figure under the moonlight made them feel alive.

After looking them for a bit, I could tell there was something rough about them. It looked like they weren't created by a professional smith.

This was another reason why they weren't sold for a much higher price. However this made me even more excited.

Then it must mean that the one who created these was a martial artist who practiced the martial art that these figures were posing as.

To prove that point, the angle of the hand strikes and foot strikes were very precise. It was created for a purpose. I looked at all of the figures carefully. They seem to belong to a martial arts technique.

I copied the pose of a couple of the figures and I received the feeling that this was created by an expert. If it was sword art I could figure it out in seconds; however, since this was completely new to me it was going to take me some time to decipher this.

I kept on shuffling and changing the order of the figures to determine the order of the techniques. I couldn't put one next to another just because it looked like a continuous movement from the other since it could have a different meaning. I kept

researching and shuffling the figures; It was like solving a very difficult puzzle. However I could tell that these weren't ordinary techniques since they used all part of the body. This was another reason why I was confused. This was my first time experiencing this sort of martial arts.

So I kept researching it calmly and diligently.

Even when the morning rooster cried, I didn't give up. Others might have given up at this point but I wasn't the type to give up so easily.

Finally, I was able to decipher the true meaning of these poses.

They were five different techniques.

These thirty-three figures were showing five different techniques. The movement of these five techniques was very profound. Due to my experience, I was able to understand that just by practicing it once.

Unfortunately that didn't mean that I understood their full application. How great was this technique that this person even made figures of it? If I had the chance I truly wanted to train and understand the reasoning behind this technique.

I put the figure back into the box. I put them in order since I figured out where each figure belonged. Then when I put the final figure inside the box there was a sound of the box opening and the

bottom compartment of the box opened.

It was made so well that no one knew that there was another compartment in the box. However I was expecting something like this was going to happen when I put the figures back in order.

It was truly a clever mechanism. Inside the compartment was a piece of paper. Since it was so old it was about to rip, but I carefully took it out and read it.

Heavenly Gate Mountain's White Crane Peak

Heavenly Gate Mountain was a mountain that was near Ho Book Fortress. It was located fairly close to the Headquarter of the Murim Alliance so I knew about the Heavenly Gate Mountain fairly well and there were many occasions when I went up that mountain. I remembered where the White Crane Peak was on that mountain.

Why did this box point towards the White Crane Peak?

Was there something there that held the origin of this martial art? Or was it something completely different?

Since it was calling for me I wasn't going to decline the invitation.

Chapter 56: Where Did This Fortuitous Encounter Come From? (3)

I decided to make a trip to the Heavenly Gate Mountain.

I was considering making this trip the next time I went to Ho Book, but I decided to make this trip now.

“I plan on making a trip.”

Since it was a long trip and my parents might get worried about me, I told them about this trip.

“Where do you plan on going?”

“To Ho Book.”

“Why do you want to go to Ho Book?”

“I want to visit the Murim Alliance Headquarter as well as make future plans while I’m on this trip.”

“Good. You need to experience many things if you want to be a real man.”

My father believed in me since I not only had changed for the better, but I also acted more grown up. After learning from Seo

Jun that my Sword Sect was truly following me, my father was even happier. He believed it was harder to gain the trust of people than to raise one's strength. He gave the same warning as before.

“You must always be respectful towards your subordinates.”

It was a shame that my father couldn't give me this sort of advice when I was the Mengju. What sort of life would I have had if my father was constantly giving me advice and reminders? In a human relationship, power wasn't everything, something else was more important.

As I left their room, my mother followed me and said, “When you weren't here Rin-ee came by.”

“Why did she come here?”

“She just came here to see me. I spent some quality time with her.”

She came here to see my mother? It seems that Song Hwa Rin had also changed after experiencing various things.

“What are your true feelings for her?”

“As I have told you before, I don't plan on marrying her yet, since I have many things I must accomplish.”

Of course my mind could change. However as of now, there were too many things I had to do and there was not enough time to be dating someone.

If I did fall in love with someone in the future, my heart would give me the sign. It could be Song Hwa Rin or it could be someone else. Nothing was predetermined.

“Is the thing that you are doing right now what you want to do?”

“Yes”

My mother was worried that I might get lonely in life so she wanted me to have a companion.

I said to my mother confidently, “Mother, I am very happy right now.”

My mother gave a slight smile, “Are you? That’s all I want from you.”

“I will visit the Song Clan on my way.”

My mother said while smiling, “You don’t have to if you don’t want to.”

“No mother. I was planning on going there.”

I was thankful that she visited my mother when I wasn't here. There was also that promise I made with Song Wu Kyung, which was to visit Song Hwa Rin every so often as a punishment.

“Hahaha, good, good. You are always welcome here.”

Song Wu Kyung was greatly happy about my visit. This wasn't that treatment that I was expecting since it was my punishment.

“Now, that you have greeted me, go meet Rin-ee.”

“Yes”

Song Wu Kyung sent me away as if he was pushing me in her direction. Seeing his expression. I believed it was a good thing that I had come here.

Soo Ran escorted me to where Song Hwa Rin was, but her eyes weren't very nice at all. However, I pretended I didn't see anything.

When we got near the training ground she stopped and said, “I have something to say.”

“Yes, please say it.”

“Please don’t do what you did in the future.”

Her face was full of worries about her master.

“Don’t worry I won’t do it again.”

“Thank you.”

She gave me a proper bow. She may look rough and impolite on the outside but this made me have a second opinion about her. Saying this wasn’t an easy task for her. However, her loyalty for Song Hwa Rin gave her the courage that she needed to speak to me. I felt happy for Song Hwa Rin since she had such a reliable servant by her side.

Song Hwa Rin was practicing with her sword at the training ground. Seeing her slim figure practicing the techniques made her even more beautiful. She was glistening with sweat, which made this truly a beautiful scene.

She was practicing the technique that had she lost to. She was trying to fill in the weakness that I highlighted.

“Master Byuk had arrived.”

After hearing Soo Ran’s words she stopped her practice and came this way.

“You have come?”

“I’m sorry for being such a bother when you were practicing.”

“No. I was about to finish now.”

Most of her swelling had gone down, but it seems that she became even more beautiful than before.

“I heard that you visited our house.”

“I visited your mother.”

Now that I thought about it, I had heard that her mother had passed away when she was young. In my previous life, I was raised by my mother. It seems that she was raised by her father.

She looked at me and said, “Will you look at my techniques?”

“Anytime.”

She showed her techniques once more.

“Last time you dodged my techniques this way and broke through my technique. So this was what I thought up with.”

This time she showed the improved version of her techniques.

She was able to reinforce it in such a short amount of time.

I didn't draw my weapon and stretched out my hand, "What if I attacked you from here?"

Song Hwa Rin was surprised. After changing the technique another flaw that didn't previously exist was created.

"The answer that I was looking for wasn't the correct one."

I smile and nodded.

She smiled and said, "Thank you. I will think about it more."

She could have asked me to perfect the technique for her, but she didn't and asked me to give her advice.

"But why are you here?"

"It is punishment."

"What?"

I told her what Song Wu Kyung said to me last time.

"Father is..." She had a helpless expression.

We had a conversation about different things. Now my conversations with her were easier.

After about an hour of talking, we said our farewells.

“You said you were going to Ho Book right? Have a safe trip.”

“Thanks”

As I was walking away she whispered, “Next time don’t come just because of punishment but... because you want to.”

She thought that I hadn’t heard, but I heard her loud and clear.

I left pretending that I hadn’t heard her last sentence.

Three days later I arrived at a village near the Heavenly Gate Mountain. There were many villages near the Heavenly Gate Mountain, but the one that I had arrived at was the closest to White Crane Peak. I had climbed the mountain many times, but this was the first time I actually stayed at one of the villages. Now that I am back here I am reminded of how much I missed out in my previous life. Fate was teaching me another lesson; let’s live this life enjoying it to the fullest.

In the village there was a small inn. Since it was a small village the owner of the inn was usually out farming. I asked the village chief and he confirmed my assumption. White Crane Peak was the peak of Heavenly Gate Mountain. It was truly dangerous to go up to the peak.

I borrowed a room and stayed there for a night.

The next morning, I started climbing the mountain. What would be waiting for me at the peak? What was the thing that I must find? So I decided to reach the peak. From the contents of the paper I determined that something was waiting for me along the path to the peak.

The path was truly treacherous, even though I had mastered many martial arts it was still difficult. On top of that as there were no signs of a pathway made by previous travelers it made it more difficult. I chose one path and it led to a cliff. I chose another path which led me to another part of the mountain. I couldn't even just jump up toward the peak since the thing that I was looking for was going to be in one of these paths.

Since it was the first day, I decided to call it a night and came back down to the inn.

The next morning, I went up the mountain again. I was able to go further up the mountain since I had the experience from yesterday. However, like yesterday it was still very difficult. I went up and down the mountain trying to find the right path. Then I stopped at a ditch in the mountain.

That night I had some wine in the inn. The owner of the inn was curious as to why I had come here

“Why did you come to our small village?”

“So that I can reach the White Crane Peak.”

“Why White Crane Peak?”

“My friend said that the view from white crane peak was beautiful so I wanted to see it for myself.”

“Oh, so that’s how it is. The reason why it’s called White Crane Peak is that the rock looks like a crane. But most people can’t climb that mountain since it is so treacherous.”

“It is truly difficult. Is there someone who familiar with that mountain?”

“Some of our men who pick herbs know it well. However they went to another mountain to collect herbs. So they won’t be back for another month.”

“Oh, it’s too bad then.” I wasn’t too depressed about it since I was going to find it with my own strength.

“It is famous being harsh. So it’s a place that many Kang Ho-In

come to train. I heard that someone very famous visited that place a long time ago.”

My eyes lit up, “Do you know who that might have been?”

“It’s a story that I heard from my grandfather so I don’t remember it that well. But I do remember him saying that he was a very famous expert.”

“Oh so that how it was”

With this I was certain. Just as how old the paper from the box was, that’s how old that person was.

“Now eat this so you can have more strength tomorrow.”

“Thank you.”

The wine tasted even better while listening to the sound of an owl.

After four days, I finally found the right path to the peak. However, there was nothing at the peak besides the beautiful view of the surroundings. I felt good coming all the way here with my own strength, but I knew that this wasn’t what the paper was pointing to.

At the peak I yelled, “Yahhhooo!”

As I was going down the mountain I found a small cave that couldn't be seen if one didn't have a keen eye. It was a small cave that a person would barely be able to fit in. I tried focusing everything on my vision, but the cave was too dark, so I was nervous to go in.

I was nervous about what was inside the cave. There could be poisonous insects or creatures inside the cave or maybe even some animals.

Was it this place? What must I do?

Then something came to my mind. This cave was made so that normal Kang Ho-in wouldn't be able to enter it. Only those who had fate on their side would be able to find this cave.

Then this could be a test.

So, I decided to go in.

The cave was small and it felt as if something could pop out at any moment. I wanted to turn around many times, but I didn't.

Luckily there weren't any poisonous creatures that jumped out at me.

As I got deeper into it the cave started to become larger and

larger and I was able to stand up.

At the end of the cave I was able to see a bright light.

So I rushed toward that light.

“Huh!”

I was surprised. If I took another step I could have fallen down the cliff.

I looked up and was able to see some sort of ledge higher up.

This ledge was so well hidden that it was impossible to see unless you were standing at this location, but I knew that the paper was pointing to that ledge.

It was truly a hard place to find. Not only was the climbing difficult, finding the ledge was even harder.

This must have been another one of the tests that the creator of this figures had created.

If you weren't able to get to the ledge you would fall down this cliff. So I had to concentrate on every move. After concentrating, I jumped up towards the ledge. It was further than what I had expected but I was able to grab onto it.

I was able to catch my breath after getting on top of the ledge.

Standing on top of the ledge I saw another cave that was large enough for me to walk in.

After taking in a large breath, I slowly entered the cave.

Chapter 57: Where Did This Fortuitous Encounter Come From? (4)

The inside of the cave was pretty dark. I didn't rush in, but instead let my eyes adjusted to the darkness. It felt as if something was going to come out any second so I concentrated on my senses. What I was afraid of wasn't any animal or a person. Even with my eyes closed, I could still deal with them. What I was afraid of were poisonous plants, bugs or animals since I didn't have the Poison Immune Physique.

I would rather deal with a hidden trap than deal with them.

Traps such as the ceiling opening up and raining down poison on me. Maybe even the ground collapsing and dropping me down the cliff;. That was how most important buildings inside the Murim Alliance were designed. I had also seen other mechanisms that shot out thousands of needles at once or filled the room with poisonous gas.

Luckily there weren't any traps inside the cave. How much longer did I have to go?

Suddenly the cave became larger and there was a wide space.

"Ah!" I was amazed at the sight.

The first thought that came to my mind was, 'How could such a place exist inside of a cave?'

The thing that grabbed my attention was the pond at the center of the cave.

I slowly walked in that direction. I didn't know where it had come from but it was very clear water. There was a small hole which allowed the sunlight to come in. Tracking the light back to its source I was able to see the sky. It seems that this was a hole in one of the cliffs.

There were different plants, flowers, and trees that were growing in various parts of the cave.

It was like a paradise inside of a cave.

However the thing that grabbed my attention the most was a single flower. Just as how Song Hwa Rin made everything around her a background for her, this flower did the same thing. It was as if this whole place was created just for this flower.

I was even more surprised when I approached this flower, "Ahh!"

I knew what this flower was. It was red like the sun. It was the Solar Sedge.

The Solar Sedge was one of the Rarest Cultivation Medicine that you could find in the Central Plains. By using the Solar Sedge a Kang Ho-In could receive sixty years of energy by absorbing its energy.

“If the Solar Sedge is here then there must also be...”

I jumped near it and scanned the area around it.

From what I had heard, near the Solar Sedge there was always a Poisonous King Cobra guarding it. The King Cobra was one of the deadliest snakes in all of the Central Plain, it was black from head to tail, and it was known as the guardian of the Solar Sedge. Just like how shadow was made from light it was believed that King Cobra fed on the yang energy given off by the Solar Sedge. If the Solar Sedge died, so would the King Cobra..

The poison given off by King Cobra is one of the strongest poisons known in Central Plain; you were as good as dead if you got bitten by it unless you had the Poison Immune Physique. Since it was such a rare creature there were no antidotes for it.

After looking around I finally found the King Cobra hiding in the bush.

Sensing my presence, the King Cobra flicked its tongue while showing his head to look for me. His poison was so strong that I was able to feel it from a distance.

I slowly drew my sword while suppressing my killing intent. I wanted to kill it in a quickly and swiftly using my sword-light. However, I didn't do so because I got a feeling that I shouldn't kill it.

I took a few steps back to reorganize my thought while King Cobra lowered its head again.

Then a question quickly arose in the back of my head. Why didn't the person who created the figures kill this snake and use the Solar Sedge themselves? Why did he create a special mechanism inside the box and leave that note? I got a feeling that I was missing something.

I scanned the area one more time without the snake noticing my presence. Then I saw a little gap in one of the walls. It was some space away from the Solar Sedge so most people would have missed unless they were trying to look for it.

That's it!

I must go in there first.

However, I needed to go in there without attracting the attention of the Snake King. It felt possible since it was some distance from it but the problem was whether I could arrive there without killing him.

This was a real difficult task, but I had confidence in my abilities and that was my answer.

I stayed close to the wall and slowly moved forward. I moved very carefully so that I wouldn't get the attention of the snake and

I stopped when it reacted a little. I was certain he felt my movement but since it was so slow he didn't feel threatened by it.

This went on for about an hour until I finally reached the small crack in the wall. Going into the crack there was another small space. As before, the place was full of light and vegetation.

There was a skull and corpse lying in one corner and a book beside it. I carefully approached it and picked it up.

Practices of the White Crane.

These words were what was written on the cover.

After flipping the cover there were some words that were written on the second page as well.

'In my last days, I discovered this place. I leave a few words for whoever would succeed me.'

The content of this book was the martial arts that was shown through the figures. There were fine details on how to practice this martial art. Everything from ki flow down to the movement of the steps. This senior probably named it the 'Practices of the White Crane' in remembrance of White Crane Peak.

These were his last word, "I leave the million-antidote herb and the Snake King for whoever succeeds me. I hope that you will achieve the Poison Immune Physique. Although the Sedge might

not have bloomed yet, I leave it for the next generation. If no one is able to succeed me then I believe that is my fate.”

There was a million-antidote herb right next to the corpse. It was known that this herb was able to cure any type of poison in this world.

“Ah!”

Now I understood everything. When this senior first discovered this place the Solar Sedge hadn't bloomed yet. He left behind that snake and this million-antidote herb so that his successor could obtain the Poison Immune Physique.

If it was a normal person they would have never done this. They would have killed the snake and taken the Solar Sedge themselves. However, this senior knew that his life was about to come to an end; so he left everything behind for whoever could find his legacy.

At the end of the book there was nothing else. Nothing about who he was, no advice on living the correct path, nothing else.

“Ah!”

Although I was surprised many times after entering this place. This was the biggest surprise of them all.

I understood what he meant by writing nothing. He wanted his successor to empty themselves of everything related to him and

live as nature will them to.

“Thank you very much.” I gave a bow to the corpse

.

I was curious to know who this person was. If he was someone who lived within the last hundred years, I must have known this person.

Who was it?

I got a feeling I would know who it was if I mastered these techniques. However, that is for another time. There was something more urgent that I had to take care of.

I could kill the snake and eat the Solar Sedge to raise my ki. However, I was hesitant.

Poison Immune Physique.

This was a chance that the heavens had given me to achieve this. Since I had both of the ingredients to achieve the Poison Immune Physique I could use this chance to achieve it.

After eating the poison sac I had use my Divine Protection Technique to slow down the effects of the poison and then slowly let it reach all parts of my body. Then I must eat the million-

antidote herb at the right time. If I ate it prematurely I would not achieve the Poison Immune Physique whereas if I ate it too late I would die.

If I was successful in this I wouldn't have to worry about poison for the rest of my life, but if I failed then I would die.

Since I didn't know the potency of the poison of this snake could I risk it?

If I failed no one would be able to find my corpse. My father, my mother, Kwang Du, as well as everyone else in my clan would be very sad.

This was a very conflicting moment for me, but I didn't take long for me to make my decision.

I discovered the figures and the box from the Shrouded City Merchants, and with the box I found the map that led me here. This must have been a work of fate. In a time like this, I was the type to face whatever problem fate would give me head on.

Since I made my decision, I proceeded to execute my plan right away.

First I carefully extracted the million-antidote herb. Then I approached the snake with my blade drawn.

Ssshhhh. Hissss

The snake hissed at me and quickly chased after me.

“I am sorry. I am going to use you for a greater purpose.”

Slash!

I cut the head of the snake and quickly extracted the poison sack from within it.

Before I ate it, I took a deep breath, “Please work for me.”

I then ate the sac and swallowed it.

The moment it touched my stomach the poison started spreading throughout my body. It was the worst experience I had in my life. It felt as if my whole body was eroding away from the inside. I quickly activated my Divine Protection Technique to ease the pain and to control the poison.

If I lost control of my body, I was finished.

“Ahhhhhhh!”

I was screaming on purpose so that I could concentrate on my voice.

My body started to turn purple. It felt as if my whole body could melt away at any second.

I must eat the million-antidote herb!

No! It wasn't time yet! If I ate it now I would fail!

My mind was in a battle with itself. I didn't know what was what.

I waited and waited.

Now, I felt that enough time had passed.

It's now! I must eat it now!

I tried to eat it but my arm didn't move.

I wasn't in control of my body anymore.

So, this is the end.

My vision started to become blurry. The flashback that I had at this last moment was my mother from my previous life.

I was eating dinner with my mother. It was when I was still young.

I remembered this moment. This was when I returned home after defeating the Fight King. As soon as I got home I told my mother what happened and my mother laughed. Now I see it, my mother's gray hair, the wrinkles in her face, and her hunched back. How could I not have seen it back then? It was because back then I only cared about myself. Then my mother picked up the food herself and fed me.

‘Good job son. I am proud of you. Eat well and grow stronger.’

Her last words, ‘eat well and grow stronger’, were ringing in my ear. I forced myself to regain my consciousness. There were tears in my eyes.

Yes, I must eat it. I cannot die like this.

I squeezed every bit of willpower that I had. Although my body didn't move, I bit my tongue. I could not die like this. I had so many things that I had to do.

Now, my current mother's face replaced my old mother face.

“You could do it, right son?”

I remembered her laughing and hugging me.

Then my arm started moving bit by bit.

My shaking hand came closer to my mouth.

‘...mother.’

I used everything that I had to place the million-antidote herb in my mouth and forcefully bit down on it. I felt it explode in my mouth and I lost consciousness.

How long had it been?

When I opened my eyes again, all the pain was gone.

I slowly raised my body. My skin which was purple regain its normal hue. I scanned my dantian nervously. If it expanded by even the slightest margin I failed at this attempt. But my dantian remained the same.

I had succeeded!

I had successfully obtained the Poison Immune Physique. From now on I didn't have to be afraid of any poison. It was because of my two mothers. I felt especially sorry for my previous mother. Don't worry mother I will fulfill the filial piety for my new parent in your stead.

Please forgive me mother. Since I am much happier than before.

After a tribulation, there were always bound to be rewards. I approached the Solar Sedge and picked it up. I washed it in the pond and ate it whole. I felt the energy given off by it. It felt warm and comfortable compared to when I ate the poison.

Sshhhhh!

The energy was flowing throughout my body. I activated my Divine Protection Technique and started absorbing everything.

After circulating the energy a few times, I scanned my dantian again. I had successfully absorbed sixty years' worth of energy. Now, I had almost one hundred years worth of energy. I could finally use the forth stance of my Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art.

By next year around this time I would have achieved one hundred and twenty years' worth of energy so I will be able to execute my fifth stance. Thinking about that made me excited.

Who could have imagined, the discovery of the dolls would lead to such a fortuitous encounter.

Practices of the White Crane.

Poison Immune Physique.

One hundred Year worth of energy.

But that wasn't the only thing that I achieved. I discovered this new cave that no one knows about. I could come here whenever I wished to take a rest or to hide from the world.

After burying the corpse I prayed, "I hope that you will pass on peacefully, senior."

Since he hadn't written down anything I didn't say anything more than that and left.

"Hahaha"

My laughter filled the cave as I left.

Chapter 58: Divine Sword Of King Shura (1)

I looked down the cliff from the entrance of the cave.

Although I couldn't see the bottom of this cliff, I was rather happy.

If I covered the entrance of the cave, no one would be able to discover it in the future.

Looking up the cliff. I saw a crack in the wall. This would now be my new entrance.

I jumped up and grabbed the edge of the crack. Then I pulled myself up on top of the rock.

Although the rock was tilted I didn't lose my balance due to my strong ki that was reinforcing me.

If I fell down this cliff now, I probably wouldn't die since I could use my sword to slow down the process. Since I had a divine sword, the Heavenly Origin Sword, I would make it down alive.

This was one of the training methods that I used. Although it wasn't as high as this, I used to jump off a cliff like this to temper myself.

By doing this I was able to feel what life and death situations

were like, which allowed me to raise my concentration.

I walked to the center of the rock and took out the book “Practices of the White Crane” and started reading it. I was enlightened by the techniques even more than from just the figures.

This martial art used the whole body to fight against the enemy but its central points were the hand and the feet. It use the hands and feet to divert the attention away from the enemy and uses another part of the body to deliver the finishing blow.

If the enemy thinks that the fist is coming, an elbow would come in its place. If they predict that the foot is coming, the back or the shoulder would come.

I wanted to know the full potential of this martial arts but it seemed that it will take a huge toll on the user so I will test it out in the future. For now, I would just stick with the basic and practice the ki flow.

Boom! Pang! Boom!

I started executing the movements while practicing the ki flow and the technique felt alive.

After executing all five stances I realized that this wasn't an ordinary technique. It was stronger than the weaponless techniques that I learned from the previous Fight King.

Although there were only five stances, it was well balanced and had a high-skill cap. As I said before the most important thing about martial arts was not the technique but who was using it.

“Practices of the White Crane” was a martial art that was on par with my Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art, which had its own mysteries.

I really wanted to know, which expert left this sort of precious technique?

Then I remembered something that Number Seven said on the carriage. ‘Was it necessary to master another martial art that was in complete contrast to the sword art?’ Now, I had gained a martial art technique that was a complete contrast to my sword art.

After practicing it a few more times and memorizing the contents of the book, I burned the book. Something like this would always bring conflict amongst martial artist so it was better to erase it from the world. If I had to pass it on to the next generation I could always write it down again when the time was right.

From this, I learned something I should never forget. I was able to obtain all this because this senior wasn’t greedy and left everything for his successor.

‘Senior, I do not know what you want, but I believe what I am trying to achieve isn’t too far off from what you tried to achieve. So please watch over me as I move forward.’

As I went down from the peak I discovered the small cave that was the entrance to the cliff. I slowly drew my blade and the Heavenly Origin Sword reacted to the hundred years' worth of energy coming from my dantian.

Woouoonnnngg!

When I slashed the empty air with my sword, a bright sword-light slashed through the air.

Shooonng!

The next moment the single sword-light divided into two pieces. It was like an asteroid split into many pieces after entering the earth's atmosphere.

Split!

The divided sword-light divided again.

Split! Split!

One turned into two, two turned to four, four to eight, and eight to sixteen.

Suddenly sixteen sword-lights rained down upon the entrance of the cave.

Boooooom! Crash

The entrance of the cave collapsed.

Just because the sword-light divided didn't mean that its destructive force was reduced. Every single piece of the sword-light was just as strong as the original. It was just that instead of one there were now sixteen sword-lights that flew out. They didn't randomly fly into a direction, I can control where and how they landed.

Imagine it, how can someone be able to block all sixteen of these sword-lights?

This was the fourth technique of the Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art, the Soul-Escaping Technique. And this was the reason why I wanted to obtain sixty years' worth of energy as soon as I could. There was one flaw to this technique. Since this was my personal technique, no one else could copy it; thus once I used this technique, others would discover that it is I, the Strongest Under the Heaven.

After the dust settled down, the entrance of the cave was buried in a landslide. Now, no one will be able to find this cave even by chance. The only way to enter this cave was to enter it by jumping in through the peak. Since no normal person would be willing to do this, this was a secret that would be known only to me. Even if I told them where the entrance of the cave was, most would not be in the right mindset to enter the cave.

After coming down I bid my farewell to the owner and the elder of the village.

“It was truly a beautiful view.”

“I am glad that you’re satisfied.”

“Thank you for your hospitality.”

“Please come back more often.”

“I will.”

Although they might have said it because I was another customer, I will come back here often. However, I have no intention of visiting the village again.

Leaving the village, my next destination was not my home but the headquarters of the Murim Alliance, Mu Han.

A man entered the Murim chancellor’s office.

His name was Jo Byuk and he was Sa Ma Chun’s right-hand man. He was just coming back from a mission to find the Divine Sword

of King Shura.

“How did it go?”

“I looked everywhere where Kal Sa Ryang had gone, but I couldn’t find it.”

Sa Ma Chun had a nasty look on his face, “He must have hidden it really well.”

“That’s what it seems like, sir.”

Sa Ma Chun believed that Kal Sa Ryang took the sword somewhere. If it was another sword, he wouldn’t mind but the Divine Sword of King Shura was a priceless treasure.

Although he had long relation with the Heavenly Dao Gate and did many things for them his position as the Chancellor wasn’t secure. Since he was chosen he must show his value through his abilities.

Jo Byuk carefully said, “There is something that I getting on my mind sir.”

“What is it?”

“When the new Mengju was appointed, I heard the entire Fierce Guard Sect changed as well.

”

“Yes it did.”

“Might he have it?”

Since the Fierce Guard was in charge of the protection of the Mengju, there was a possibility that they could have taken the blade. But Sa Ma Chun didn't believe that they had taken it.

When he read the report on Baek Pyo, he didn't believe that Baek Pyo was someone who was capable of something like this.

“He was someone who was very loyal to Chun Ha Jin, there is no way that he would steal something that belonged to Chun Ha Jin.”

“But what if Kal Sa Ryang entrusted the sword to him?”

“Kal Sa Ryang?”

Sa Ma Chun nodded his head, “Are the two of them close?”

“They didn't have a terrible relationship.”

Sa Ma Chun nodded, “If it was something else he might have, but he would never entrust something like the Divine Sword to anyone

else. He must have hidden it somewhere no one would be able to find it.”

The Divine Sword of King Shura was a priceless item, so he believed that Kal Sa Ryang would never entrust it to anyone else.

‘But just in case’

Since he didn’t want to leave anything for chance he said, “Where is he now?”

The place that I arrived at when I got to Mu Han was the Wind Tavern. Since I was here, I wanted to see Kal Sa Ryang and Baek Pyo’s face as well as learn more about the Murim Alliance.

When I entered the tavern, Baek Pyo recognized me “Didn’t you come here before?”

“Yes I have. I am surprised that you remembered me.”

“How could I forget. You were my first customer. Didn’t you have some snacks and alcohol at that place?”

The first time that I came here I sat at my usual spot and ordered the food that I usually ordered when I was still the Mengju. I remembered the surprised look on Baek Pyo from before.

“Yes I have”

“Haha, you came at a good time. Please sit down.”

I sat down at my usual place. But something was different than before. There was a decoration of shield and sword on the wall.

“The interior seems to have changed.”

“I just made it since I was bored.”

“It looks great.”

“Thank you.”

Seeing him like this, I was so happy that I wanted to bring him to San Dong with me.

“How is the business?”

“Haha, just enough for me to make a living.”

“Do you have any family?”

“Yes, I have a wife and a son.”

“You must be happy.”

Then Baek Pyo said it in a low tone, “You must be knowledgeable.”

“About what?”

“Before you are married you live with your eyes opened, but after you are married you live with your eyes closed.”

This was something that I had said to Baek Pyo before. Who would have thought that he would say this back to me?

“I’ll take it as you must be wise in deciding your companion.”

He stared at me.

I asked him while laughing, “Are you regretting your marriage?”

“How could I? I am very happy. Hahaha.”

Out of all the Murim-in that I knew Baek Pyo was someone who was very faithful to his family. He truly loved his wife and son.

“What should I get you today?”

“Same thing as before. Do you remember it by chance?”

“Of course.”

After handing me some alcohol and basic snacks, he went into the kitchen to prepare the dish.

After watching his figure for a bit I asked him, “Are you truly happy?”

Then Baek Pyo stopped his cooking and looked at me. He was in disarray since I must have been the first customer that had asked him such question.

Baek Pyo said while smiling, “Yes, I am happy.”

Whether that was the truth or not I did not know but it seemed that Baek Pyo was happy.

Then another customer entered the tavern.

The person who entered was Jo Byuk and he didn’t stop giving off his cold ki. He then stared at me with bloodlust.

Since I was always suppressing my energy I must have looked like a normal customer in his eyes.

Then another person followed. This time I was surprised when I saw him. The person who just entered was Sa Ma Chun.

I remembered Sa Ma Chun's face, it seems Baek Pyo must have remembered his face as well.

“Chancellor.”

“Do you remember me?”

“Of course. I don't know if you might remember, but I saw you a couple of times.”

“Oh, yes we have...”

“Why have you ... please have a seat here.”

Sa Ma Chun sat down.

“I heard that you were the owner of this place.”

“Ah, yes I am.”

“Can I have some wine please?”

“Of course.”

Feeling a little alarmed Baek Pyo quickly brought some snack and wine.

Baek Pyo may be alarmed, but I was more nervous than him.

Would Sa Ma Chun have come here by chance? Would he take care of someone who already left the Alliance? Of course not. He was someone who only did things that were beneficial to him. He wouldn't care about anyone who left the alliance.

Then why was he here?

He must have had a purpose for coming here.

Something must have happened.

Sa Ma Chun asked Baek Pyo, "Have you met Kal Sa Ryang recently?"

"Oh yes, I met him once."

"Did he come here?"

"Yes, he came over to visit when I opened this place."

"You two must have been close."

“Yes, we were.”

Baek Pyo didn't hide anything and told them everything.

Good job Baek Pyo. That is how you do it. You can never lie to them about anything that they are going to investigate. You must never tell a lie, but you must also never tell them the full truth. You must stay in the gray area between the two.

Then Sa Ma Chun asked various questions like why he was running this shop, how many customers come everyday. This went on for an hour.

“I must get going since I am busy.”

“Thank you for visiting. Please take care of yourself.”

As Sa Ma Chun was about to go out he asked, “Did Kal Sa Ryang entrust you with anything?”

He asked this question so suddenly.

But Baek Pyo answered calmly, “He didn't entrust me with anything.”

Sa Ma Chun smiled while staring at Baek Pyo, “I Hope your business is successful. Your wine tasted very good.”

With that, Sa Ma Chun exited the tavern, and my heart finally calmed down.

I didn't know if Sa Ma Chun got what he wanted but I knew that this place and Baek Pyo would get involved in whatever was happening.

I wanted Baek Pyo to be happy. Even if I couldn't make him into one of my subordinates, I still wanted him to be happy.

Because of that, I didn't want Baek Pyo to be involved with whatever was happening in the Alliance. So although I don't know what he wanted out of Baek Pyo, I must take care of this business in Baek Pyo's stead.

After emptying the glass I smiled and said, "Since the wine tasted so good I think I will come back tomorrow."

Chapter 59: Divine Sword Of King Shura (2)

Sa Ma Chun revealed his true thoughts after he got back to his office.

“This man Baek Pyo, his personality was just as I expected.”

Jo Byuk silently understood the true meaning of his words, “Do you mean that Kal Sa Ryang didn’t entrust the sword to him?”

“That’s what I believed at first. But...”

As he was about say something but he didn’t.

“When I questioned him at the end, he was way too calm. It could be that he was calm because he led the Fierce Guard Sect for so long, but that calmness was... there was something about it. It was practiced, as if he prepared it beforehand in case something like this happened.”

“You are very sharp, sir.”

Sa Ma Chun nodded, “Something was off. If he stole something that precious why did he stay so close to the Murim Alliance and not go someplace further away?”

He couldn’t figure out Baek Pyo. This was because Baek Pyo loved Chun Ha Jin so much he left the Alliance to run a shop near the

Alliance.

“There must be a reason sir.”

The person who was initially doubtful of Baek Pyo was Jo Byuk. Since he couldn't find anything when he investigated Kal Sa Ryang, he wanted to find something out from Baek Pyo.

“We might need to investigate further.”

“I'll take care of it sir.”

“How?”

He believed that he would never be able to find the sword using a normal method since his opponent was the former Chief of the Guards.

“I think it's better if you don't know.”

What he meant by this was he will take care of everything. If something happened, he would take responsibility for it.

“You understand, right? He was the best Chief Guard that the Murim had.”

“Of course sir.”

Since Sa Ma Chun warned him, he said “Good, then I will entrust this to you.”

After Jo Byuk left Sa Ma Chun stared out the window. It must have been a coincidence that Kal Sa Ryang was coming this way with his arms full of books and documents. He was working late into the night.

As he stared at Kal Sa Ryang emotionlessly, Kal Sa Ryang looked his way said his greetings, “You haven’t retreated to your room yet sir?”

Just like an actor on stage, Sa Ma Chun changed his expression and made a lighter expression.

“You are working hard through the night.”

Although he already knew that Kal Sa Ryang was working through the night due to all the work that he had given him, he still acted friendly.

“It must be that I am getting old as I can’t do things as I used to. Please enjoy yourself sir.”

After bowing one more time Kal Sa Ryang left. He was able to sense a cold stare at his back.

Although he had his back turned he didn't make any changes to his expression since he knew that he was being watched. He knew that Sa Ma Chun still didn't trust him

Thus, he had to act like a loser since there were still things that had to be done. However, there would come a time when they trust him. That was when he was going to exact his revenge. So until that day he had to take whatever hardships came his way. He spent his entire life serving the Alliance and at one point he was the Chancellor. He had subordinates who would give up their lives at his command. Although most of them were spies that he had spread throughout all of Kang Ho as well as inside the Alliance. They would move once he gave the order.

His target was not Sa Ma Chun, but Ma Bong Gi and whoever was behind him.

After Ma Bong Gi became the Mengju, he was cautiously investigating everything about him. He came to conclusion that there was someone behind the curtains pulling the strings.

'I don't know how you managed to kill the Mengju, but I will get my revenge. It doesn't matter how long it takes, I will get it.'

He was willing to do anything to prepare for that day.

I got a room at an inn near Baek Pyo's tavern.

The first thing that I had to do was find out what Sa Ma Chun was looking for. If Baek Pyo had what he was looking for, then he was in grave danger.

Sa Ma Chung had asked whether Kal Sa Ryang entrusted him with anything.

Was he looking for something that belonged to Kal Sa Ryang? Or was he looking for something that belonged to me?

Since Sa Ma Chun personally moved, the item must be very important. What would be so important? Since I didn't know any important belongings of Kal Sa Ryang, I just started recalling my important belongings. Since I didn't like collecting things and decorating things it couldn't be money or jewelry. It definitely wouldn't be cultivating medicines since they could find plenty of those in the medical storage. I was someone who lived by the blade.

My last words enlightened me.

Could it be?

I stood up from my seat.

The Divine Sword Of King Shura?

I recalled a conversation that I had with Kal Sa Ryang some ten years ago.

“Mengju-nim why do you only use the Divine Sword of King Shura? Aren’t there other divine swords in the weapon vault. Why did you send them all back after using them for a just month?”

“Did I do that?”

“If you say it like that, I can see how important King Shura is to you.”

“Since I spent so much time with it, it feels like a part of me. If I die please take good care of this sword, and pass it on to someone worthy.”

“Why are you saying such things? That won’t happen for a couple of decades, sir.”

“Haha, my man. My age is already past sixty.”

I got a feeling that he could have hidden it away. If it was something like this, then Sa Ma Chun wouldn’t let up so easily.

Then another scene came to my mind. The sword and the shield mounted on the wall in the Wind Tavern.

Oh lord!

I first thought that he created it as a decoration. However, I never saw Baek Pyo create anything nor did I hear anything about him doing something like that as a hobby.

Did he hide the Divine Sword of King Shura there?

After getting a hundred thousand nyang from the bank, I went to one of the information merchants.

Since this was the headquarter of the Murim Alliance there were numerous Information Merchant Guilds here.

Unlike before they were now more open to the public as they were in competition with one another, so it would be easy to find one.

However the place that I went to was the Heavenly Net Organization. It was the place that I went before in order to find Kal Sa Ryang, the Unleakable Tavern.

The reason that I had come here was to buy some information on the man who was with Sa Ma Chun. From the feeling that I got yesterday, he didn't seem like an ordinary guard.

Sa Ma Chun visited the Wind Tavern with only a single guard,

meaning he was someone who was close to Sa Ma Chun as well as a hidden expert. Thus, I had a feeling that Sa Ma Chun was going to order that man to do something.

I didn't think that this is a bad investment, since I can find out about the man who was close to Sa Ma Chun. Investigating Sa Ma Chun directly might have been very difficult; however, investigating his men was another story. Since these information merchants were competing with one another they had already done some digging, and had the information that I wanted.

It cost three thousand nyang. It was a high price for a martial artist but considering he was a subordinate of the Chancellor, the price was high.

After collecting the information, I went back to the Wind Tavern

When I arrived there, Baek Pyo had just opened up.

“So you really did come again!”

“Oh, did I come a bit too early?”

“No, we are just opening up. Welcome!”

“Please understand. I like the feeling of wind coming out of my alcohol.”

“Haha, it’s my first time hearing something like that. Wind coming out of your alcohol?”

How could one feel a wind coming out of their alcohol? It was because of Baek Pyo. When I looked at him I got the feeling of light breeze crossing the wide Central Plain.

“Please come in.”

At that time I saw Baek Pyo remove something from the door. Although I pretended not to see it, I knew what it was.

It was a commonly used bug called a Night Beetle. It was a bug that was only awake at night and made a noise when an intruder came near it. It was mainly used during night guard duty since it was a good alert system.

After going in I went to the place that I always sat.

“I am sorry since we are just opening up.”

“I should be sorry for coming so early.”

“Haha, I would be rich having a customer like yourself.”

“Haha, then i’ll come here every day so that I can make you rich.”

“Ha ha ha” Baek Pyo laughed with a good mood. “Please, wait a moment.”

“Don’t mind me. I’ll just sit here and enjoy the view.”

“Please.”

This place truly has an enjoyable scenery. The breeze felt as if it was going to take you to another place.

It even gave me the feeling of wanting to live in at such a place.

Maybe Baek Pyo had always planned on living in such a place after his days as the Chief Guard were over.

“Where does your family live?”

“They live right behind the store. Since my child is still young, my wife is unable to help me.”

“Oh, so that how it was.”

I understood his worries since I knew almost everything about him.

Others might underestimate his strength, but I knew how strong he was. As I always said, ‘If you want to have a long life in Kang

Ho, you must hide your true strength.'

The people who took this most to heart were the members of the Fierce Guard Sect.

He was someone who once was the greatest bodyguard. The man who had once stood up to the combined attack of Black Heaven Palace members and the Seven Evil Monsters.

Others might believe that Seven Evil Monsters were just another seven members from the Thirteen Demons Alliance, but they are mistaken. Those seven monsters, no those seven witches were so skilled in their craft that many members of the Murim Alliance had fallen under their spell. However, he was someone who was able to hold off all seven of them himself. That was the sort of person Baek Pyo was.

However, what I was worried about was his family. The stronger you were, the more likely it was that the enemy would attack at your weak points. These people would do something like this since they were truly shameless.

My gaze once again turned towards the decorations on the wall.

In my past life, I had a really close connection with the King Shura.

It is said that a divine sword will recognize its master and understand its masters' feeling. I too had that sort of connection to

King Shura. When I was mad, it was also mad. When I was happy, it was happy with me. Thus, since our emotions resonated with each other, our attacks became that much stronger.

If it was like before I could give it some of my ki, and it will react to it. Since I was in the body of Byuk Lee Dan I didn't know if this would work. However, as I still practiced the Divine Protection Technique I thought it was worth a shot.

When Baek Pyo left the shop for a second to take the trash out, I quickly got close to the sword and sent it a small amount of my ki.

The next moment the sword resonated at my touch, and I knew the truth.

It truly was the Divine Sword of King Shura! He had hidden the King Shura inside the decoration!

At first, I was baffled, speechless even. Why did he hide it in such an open place?

However, I soon understood his intent. Since it was more important than his life, he didn't want to entrust it to anyone else nor did he want to bury it somewhere. So the best place to hide it was where he could see it.

This wasn't an ordinary enemy, and Baek Pyo would give his life to protect the sword.

How must I proceed with this?

Chapter 60: Divine Sword Of King Shura (3)

The next day I received the information about the man who was with Sa Ma Chun.

His name was Jo Byuk. He was originally a rogue expert who caught the attention of Sa Ma Chun and became his long-serving right-hand man.

He did all sorts of illegal things including assassination, but he was able to get out using Heavenly Dao Gate's name. There was other information about him but this was the most pivotal piece of information. Another bit of important information that I found was when he was still a rogue expert there were three mercenaries with him. Since they followed him like shadows, they were given the name the Three Rogues. If Jo Byuk was going to do something, he would most definitely use these three individuals.

So I went back to the Heavenly Net Guild to investigate these three individuals. I told them to investigate the three as soon as possible. I didn't need to know their skills, just where they were and how they looked. As I wanted to know this information faster than normal, I had to spend twice as much money. However, since it was something related to Baek Pyo, I didn't feel bad about spending all of my money. Even if I went broke, I wouldn't regret it.

I needed to take care of this very carefully. Since Sa Ma Chun is one the pillars of the Alliance I couldn't afford to get involved with him just yet.

Baek Pyo welcomed me wholeheartedly again today, “You came again today.”

“Didn’t I tell you I was going to make you rich?”

“Haha, I should open up another location.”

I felt that I needed to get closer to Baek Pyo for the future, so I told him everything about me. That I was the heir of the Byuk Clan in the San Dong City. As well as how I wanted to expand our clan and change the Kang Ho.

I was told him these things so that in the future I could bring him and his family back to San Dong with me.

The most important thing about a relationship is trust. You can’t make strong relationships if you are distrustful from the beginning. Also Baek Pyo could get the wrong idea of me if I lied to him so I decided to be truthful with him.

This was a very important task for me since this will allow to me to direct a dangerous situation away from him while building my relationship with him.

“Young master Byuk, you should be in your prime springtime of youth.”

It seemed that Baek Pyo was jealous of my youth.

“You are still young yourself, aren’t you?”

“Haha, my springtime of youth passed by many springs ago.”

“I don’t think one’s age is important, what is more important is to have a youthful heart.”

“Is it?”

“Saying things like this makes me sound like an old man.”

“No. There are many aspects about you young master Byuk that makes you different from your peers.”

“So you are saying that I am old?”

Embarrassed, Baek Pyo said, “That’s not what I meant. I mean that there is something about you that makes you seem different from others.”

Of course, I would be different than others. Do you know how much I care about you? Baek Pyo-ya! I wanted to cry out his name and hug him, but I cannot do that right now.

“That is a compliment, right?”

“Of course.”

“Then, I will drink to your good intention. Please bring me some alcohol.”

There were some customers in the evening. I carefully inspected them to see if they were dangerous characters, but it seemed they were normal customers. So, I drank late into the evening and went back to my inn.

The next day I got the information about the three mercenaries from the Heavenly Net Guild. They told me that the three of them were on their way to Mu Han. This only verified my prediction. They wouldn't come to Mu Han without orders, meaning that they were on their way to assist Jo Byuk with whatever he was going to do.

The Three Rogues must be individuals who were crueler than Jo Byuk since they were mercenaries.

I grew angrier at Jo Byuk and Sa Ma Chun.

So, they want to use these dirty bastards to do their dirty work for them, huh?

However I had to calm my heart. There was scum everywhere in Kang Ho. What I had to do now was not get angry but think of a

way to protect Baek Pyo.

Their expected time of arrival was five days from now. Meaning I had to take care of this within those five days, and if I cannot do that then I'll just have to eliminate them when they arrive. Eliminating them wouldn't be hard, but Baek Pyo would take the blame for it. So I had to take care of this as cleanly as possible.

After the person from Heavenly Net Guild left, I was deep in thought while I was strolling down the street.

In my last life, if I had a problem I would usually take a stroll while thinking of some ways to solve it. Thinking like this reminded me how much I missed Kal Sa Ryang.

How much easier would my life be if Kal Sa Ryang was by my side right now?

I recalled a conversation that I had with him before.

“How can you be so brilliant?”

“You praise me too much sir.”

“No need to be humble.”

“The more complex the problem, the simpler the solution.”

“Do you know, by saying something like that you are belittling us even more. It may be simple to you, but for us we wouldn’t have even thought of something like that.”

If the solution to this problem was simple as well, what would it be?

The problem is Sa Ma Chun wanted the King Shura’s Divine Sword. He was suspecting that Baek Pyo had it, and Baek Pyo did have it.

The solution to this problem was to...prove that Baek Pyo doesn’t have King Shura’s Divine Sword.

But how?

However, that wasn’t the only problem. Even if Baek Pyo got out of this unscathed, Sa Ma Chun would suspect Kal Sa Ryang even more. And King Shura’s Divine Sword was too precious to hand off to them...

Then something came to my mind. What if I made them believe King Shura’s Divine Sword wasn’t there from the start? What if I made them think that I, the previous mengju, got rid of the weapon?

I was standing still on the street deep in thought.

How long did I stay there for?

When I started moving again. It was not a contemplative step, but a step towards my plan.

The manager of the Heavenly Net Guild, Ban Suh Jung, was silently staring at her tea.

“What are you thinking so hard about?”

The Chef from inside the kitchen approached her. The Chef was her guard as well as an elder of the Heavenly Net Guild, and his name was Elder Bing.

Elder Bing had taken care of Ban Suh Jung ever since she was little. The relationship between the two of them was like that of a grandfather and granddaughter. He knew what she was thinking just by looking at her.

“Someone from the Murim Alliance called to meet with me.”

“Was it Ma Bong Gi? What does that old rat want?”

Elder Bing knew everything about Ma Bong Gi, and he hated that old rat.

“It wasn’t Ma Bong Gi but Sa Ma Chun. It seems that he sent

some people to Ghostly Eye Palace, and The Thousand Crossroads Guild as well.”

“So he wants to make us compete with one another.”

“That’s what it seems like.”

“Scheming rats, like master like servant. I am worried about the future of Kang Ho.” Elder Bing made an exhausted expression.

The Heavenly Net Guild, The Ghostly Eye palace, and the Thousand Crossroad guilds were the three largest information guilds in all of Kang Ho. Since these three guilds controlled most of the information in Kang Ho they were one of the major powers of Kang Ho.

When Chun Ha Jin was still alive, he would always give them face and summon all three of them at once. Most of the agreements would take place after various talks with the members of the True Heart Sect, then move up to Chancellor Kal, and then finally to the mengju.

Now however, they were just being directly summoned without any choice. They were not getting the respect that they once received.

Staring down at the tea cup, Ban Suh Jung's eyes were lonely as ever.

“Have you heard any news about that person?”

Ban Suh Jung looked up curiously, but she already knew who he was referring to.

Elder Bing said it as if she didn't already know, “About the previous chancellor.”

“I heard that he was demoted to a regular advisor.”

She said it as if that was all she knew, but she knew much more. Since she had close ties with the people of True Heart Sect she knew that he was being harassed by Sa Ma Chun, and that Sa Ma Chun was looking for the King Shura's Divine Sword.

“He will... endure it well. Since he is a strong person.”

She already knew that Kal Sa Ryang had feelings for her and she didn't hate it. However, Kal Sa Ryang never truly opened his heart to her. Would the situation be different if he confessed his feelings for her? It could be.

Elder Bing knew the feelings that these two had for each other. ‘This frustrating pair!’

However, he knew that he couldn't get involved with their affairs.

Then one of their subordinates came in disguised as a customer, “It seems like you have to go to headquarters right now.”

After about an hour of waiting at the headquarters, a woman appeared with an elderly man.

I knew who it was, it was the manager of the Heavenly Net Guild.

“I heard that you are here to sell some very important information?”

Although she sounded and looked different from normal I knew that she was the manager, but she didn’t know who I was. I applied a new face-alteration mask and changed my voice.

“Yes I am.”

Although information merchants usually sold information, there were occasions where they would also buy information.

“So this information is something that the late Mengju left behind?”

“Yes. A piece of writing that had never been revealed.”

This was the reason why she personally came here.

I took out the paper.

“It’s the previous Mengju, Chun Ha Jin’s writing.

“How do you know it belonged to Chun Ha Jin?”

“I am sure that you would know if it was his writing.”

“Can you allow us to verify it?”

“Of course.”

An elderly man entered the room.

I folded the paper and only showed the first few lines. The old man brought a magnifying lens and compared his note with mine.

After some time, the old man nodded and retreated. This meant that it was Chun Ha Jin’s writing.

Of course it would be. Since I personally wrote it and brought it here. I just made some alterations so that it looked old.

“I must see it to see how much it is worth. Will you allow me to see it?”

“Yes. I trust the Heavenly Net Guild. I am sure you will not try to betray my trust.”

“Don’t worry.”

I gave the paper to the old man. Then he put the paper on a tray and gave it to the manager. After reading the paper she was surprised.

I put something related to martial arts. It wasn’t anything important. It was just a piece of my Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art that I changed so that it was irrelevant.

But the important part was this.

...I was unable to achieve my life goal, the Spirit Sword State. Now I am going to get rid of my friend, the King Shura’s Divine Sword, that has accompanied me for countless years so that I can find a new approach to reach the Spirit Sword State. I am leaving everything to fate. The reason why I am leaving this note behind is because this marks the end of a chapter of my life...

I wrote about how I got rid of King Shura’s Divine Sword. I knew that Kal Sa Ryang had feelings for Ban Suh Jung, and that was the reason why I visited the store ran by her. Since I believed she had feelings for him as well, I assumed that she knew what was happening with Kal Sa Ryang.

Thus, I will leave this piece of information with her so that she could somehow give pass it along to Sa Ma Chun, so that it can be used to get Kal Sa Ryang out of his bind. Since she already had the paper it was their information now.

Even if she didn't do what I expected, it wouldn't matter since I will pass this to Sa Ma Chun as well.

“How much will you buy this information for?”

“Ten thousand nyang”

She didn't ask where I got this from. Since that was part of their code.

I really didn't want her money, rather, I wanted to give her money. However I could not make it too obvious.

“No, give me fifteen thousand nyang.”

“This information is worth ten thousand nyang.”

I tried all sort of acts to try bargain with them but in the end, I gave up.

“Alright, I'll sell it for ten thousand.”

“Thank you for being considerate.”

Sometime later, a man gave me a bag full of money. Just like the Shrouded City Merchants everything was done through traceless bank notes.

I didn't know what she was going to do with it. All that I could hope for was her to pass along the information.

If Sa Ma Chun received information like this now, his suspicions could rise. However, since it was personally written by the previous mengju he would have to accept it. If he did that then Baek Pyo would be cleared of all suspicion and wouldn't be bothered.

There could be some other variables that might come into play; however, this was the best solution that I thought of.

All I could do was throw it into the Heavenly Net Guild and hope that nothing bad will happen.

Chapter 61: Divine Sword Of King Shura (4)

Ban Suh Jung entered the inner halls of the Murim Alliance. Since Elder Bing couldn't follow her any further, he was forced to wait outside.

The person who was waiting at the guest pavilion was Sa Ma Chun.

“Welcome Manager Ban.”

“It is an honor to meet you Chancellor Sa.”

“Now, please sit.”

Wine was already prepared at the table. However, considering that his guest was a female it was inappropriate for him to prepare alcohol beforehand.

Regardless of whether it was a male or female, serving alcohol on their first meeting was unacceptable in these sorts of situations. Usually at the first meeting, it was more appropriate to serve tea.

“Thank you for coming on such a short notice.”

“No, I should have come earlier.”

“Ha ha. Now, please have a cup.”

She would have gladly taken a cup, even on her first meeting with someone, if that person had a good character. However, she knew what kind of person was in front of her.

He was someone who had done all sort of evil deeds alongside the Heavenly Dao Gate.

He didn't deserve to be the chancellor, nor did he have the ability to be one. Rather than being a chancellor he is more suited for politics.

Regardless of her thoughts, her outer appearance looked perfectly normal. She knew how to act in these sorts of situations. If the person who she was talking to was someone with a good character, then she could be honest as they won't take too much offense in it. However, for people like Sa Ma Chun, if you made one wrong move then you would be finished.

Then, someone else entered the room.

“Have you called me?”

The person who arrived was Kal Sa Ryang.

He was rather surprised to see Ban Suh Jung here, and the same went for her. Who would have expected that these two would meet at this place?

“Ah, it seems like you know each other.”

Sa Ma Chun asked as if he didn't know about the relation between the two of them.

However Kal Sa Ryang, as well as Ban Suh Jung, knew that this meeting was set up by Sa Ma Chun.

“It has been a long time, have you been well?” The first to speak and break the silence was Ban Suh Jung.

Kal Sa Ryang respectfully replied, “Yes, I have been well.”

But Ban Sa Jung felt the sadness in his response. She could feel his true thoughts in his words: ‘How could I be well after losing my master?’

Kal Sa Ryang handed Sa Ma Chun the documents that he brought.

“Here are the documents that you requested.”

“Ha ha, thank you. Here, have a drink since you are here.”

“Since I am still working, please take it as I have received one from you. Then I will take my leave.”

“Work hard.”

Sa Ma Chun did not know that these two had feelings for each other. The reason why he brought Kal Sa Ryang here was to humiliate him in front of her. It would be humiliating enough to make him do this sort of thing in front of others, and Sa Ma Chun enjoyed humiliating and mentally straining Kal Sa Ryang like this.

Right as Kal Sa Ryang was about to leave Sa Ma Chun said, “He was such a talented person.”

He said it in a past tense so that he would humiliate Kal Sa Ryang even more.

Ban Suh Jung said it while smiling, “There are many talented people in Kang Ho. However, there aren’t many people who are needed for the age.”

Although she said it emotionlessly, it was like honey in Sa Ma Chun’s ears.

He was laughing and thinking, ‘Yes, that is true.’

That was what power tasted like. If he wasn’t the chancellor how could he force her to drink the alcohol, and how could he force her to say something like this? If it was him from before he became chancellor, it would have been almost impossible to even meet the manager of the Heavenly Net Guild.

This was his reward for cleaning up after the Heavenly Dao Gates messes and working for their favor.

After a few exchanges, it was time for her to leave.

“It was nice to see you, I’ll meet you again, sir.”

“Yes, let’s meet again.”

Before she left, she took out a piece of paper from her robe.

“This was a piece of information that just came into our guild. I brought this to you as a present for our first meeting.”

After reading what was written on the paper, Sa Ma Chun was surprised.

“Is this really something that was left behind by the previous mengju?”

“Yes, we have already confirmed it.”

“How did you acquire this?”

Ban Suh Jung replied with a smile, “As you know, information in Kang Ho naturally flows like this. Just like how the seasons change naturally.”

Sa Ma Chun didn't ask any further. This was a code that all information merchants never broke. They would never reveal the sources of their information, and she even brought this piece of news as a gift.

Ban Suh Jung was debating whether to hand this information over or not. She was worried how it would affect Kal Sa Ryang. However, after seeing Kal Sa Ryang like this she decided to share this information.

She quickly left the guest pavilion and Sa Ma Chun followed soon after.

"Something seems fishy," Said Jo Byuk, after hearing the story. "And the timing is too close sir."

"Didn't she say that it was personally written by the Mengju?"

"Someone could have forged it."

"It contained the Mengju's personal sword art within it. No one but he knows it. So how can you explain that?"

"But we can't prove whether or not it was truly his."

“We should wait first, since we are looking into it.”

Sa Ma Chun already handed off the paper to the person who was the best at this sort of work.

“If it comes out your way, then it shows that the Heavenly Net Guild is not giving me face.”

He didn't believe that they would be that foolish. Fighting against him was like fighting against the Alliance itself.

“Would they really risk their lives trying something like that?”

“Someone could be using them, Sir.”

“Who? The previous mengju?”

The first person that came to his mind was Baek Pyo since he was under suspicion for having the sword.

“I got a feel of him that day and looking at his record, he isn't that sort of a person.”

Jo Byuk agreed, “It could have been done by Kal Sa Ryang.”

“It could have.”

Since he had someone observing Kal Sa Ryang already, they would have reported that he went to the Heavenly Net Guild. However he didn't get such report from anyone.

Also, by seeing their interaction today he could tell that they haven't met in ages.

Then, one of the subordinates entered the room.

"After analyzing it, it really is written by the Mengju."

"Are you certain?"

"Yes, they say they are certain."

"Probability of it being forged?"

"Almost zero. From what I was told they believe that the Mengju wrote this a couple of months before he passed away. I also verified with some of the experts about his martial art and it was confirmed."

"Alright, you are dismissed."

After the subordinate left the room Sa Ma Chun looked at Jo Byuk who was still full of doubt.

“Even if it was real we still need to be suspicious of them.”

“If it was them it probably would be Kal Sa Ryang or Baek Pyo since they most likely would have kept some of the Mengju’s belongings. However, the important thing is that the sword is now gone.”

The reason why he wanted to find the Divine Sword of King Shura was so that he could present it to Ma Bong Gi. However since it was gone he said, “Stop wasting time investigating Baek Pyo. We have more important things we must do.”

Sa Ma Chun didn’t have any interest with Kang Ho-in since that was how he lived all his life.

That night I was able to meet Baek Pyo's son, Myung He, since he was doing chores for his mother.

“You should greet him, he is young master Byuk.”

“How are you, sir? I am called Myung He.”

He was Baek Pyo’s seven-year-old son. Having bright eyes and being well mannered, It really made me wonder who he takes after.

“Who does he take after that makes him so cute? Sister-in-law must be very beautiful.”

Baek Pyo was flustered after hearing the words sister-in-law. He was just the owner of a tavern while I was the heir of the Byuk Clan.

Seeing me smile he relaxed a bit. After giving me one more glance he finally relaxed.

I should have done this more in my previous life. Now that I look back, why didn't I say something like this more often? What was so important about being the Mengju that I lived emotionlessly like that?

“Myung-Ah you must listen to your parents well.” Then I gave him a single nyang and Myung He asked Baek Pyo if he could keep it. After Baek Pyo gave a nod he thanked me and ran towards that back door.

Smiling as he watched his son leave, Baek Pyo said, “I now spend my days raising him.”

Baek Pyo spent the springtime of his youth fighting with me. He roamed the battlefield alongside me and fought by my side. Although he lost many comrades and received many wounds, there is a wound in his heart that will never heal. Now, after leaving the Alliance he was guarding my sword. His whole life had been protecting me and now it was protecting my belonging.

Thinking about his life...what was so important about some old man's life. What is so important about his weapon?

Baek Pyo-ya, please take a rest and enjoy your life. Now I will protect you.

Three different men entered an inn in Mu Han.

They all looked different and had different atmospheres about them. The oldest looking one had hair all over his body making him look like a monkey. Another one was so muscular that his biceps were as big as a normal person's waist. The final one was terrifyingly ugly.

Although they looked different, they had one similar attribute. They didn't hide their killing intent and released their aura without restraint. These three were Jo Byuk's shadows, the Three Rogues.

The person who was waiting for them was Jo Byuk.

"You have arrived?"

"Why have you called all three of us? What do you want us to do?"

“I am sorry, but your mission just got canceled.”

They showed some signs of disappointment. So Jo Byuk tossed them a pouch that had about hundred nyang inside of it.

“Go play with some women and rest for a while.”

Their expressions got a bit brighter.

“Wait for my order and don’t leave Mu Han.”

He didn’t send them back. Although Sa Ma Chun moved on from this case, there was something that was still bothering him. So he wanted to investigate about Baek Pyo secretly. He wanted to prove that his intuition was correct.

Then one of the men asked, “Who was our target?”

“The former chief guard of the former mengju.”

“So he must be pretty strong.”

“Not just strong. Even if you three joined forces you wouldn’t be able to kill him.”

“Is he that strong?”

“What do you see the Fierce Guard Sect as? They are all experts who protect the Mengju. He was the chief of them. Even if I fought him personally I wouldn’t have much chance. Don’t worry though, he has a wife and a child. We could always bring him to his knees.”

The look on these four faces was vile. That was how they lived up to this point and that was how they would continue to live.

“Since he is on your hit list, even if he was the chief guard or his granddaddy the result would be the same.”

No one would remain alive after being put on their target list. Even an expert had some sort of a weakness, and they would exploit that to their advantage.

After they left, I came out of hiding. I was carefully watching them as they made their way through Mu Han and listened in on their conversation silently.

After hearing that the mission was canceled I learned that my plan had actually worked. However it only succeeded half way. Jo Byuk wasn’t completely satisfied, and the proof for that was that he didn’t send back the Rogue Three.

I decided that if they tried to lay even a finger on Baek Pyo’s family I would eliminate them all.

This was what I hated the most. How could a martial artist be so shameless as to attack someone who did not know martial arts? Or

attack someone else's family? Especially if it was Baek Pyo's family.

I wanted to eliminate them all right then and there, but I could not. Since I diverted Sa Ma Chun's attention away from Baek Pyo, I didn't need him to have any second thoughts on this. I would give it some time to find an excuse to eliminate them.

Since now you are on my target list, you should prepare to leave behind a will.

Chapter 62: You Don't Know Anything (1)

I made my move right after I verified that the Three Rogues had entered a Gieseng House. Since Jo Byuk gave them some money, they would be staying in there for a while.

This was an important time for me to think of a way get rid of them. There was something I needed in order to eliminate the Jo Byuk and his group of mercenaries.

It was a scapegoat.

Who could I use as a scapegoat here?

I didn't need to worry too much about the Three Rogues since they were Mercenaries and nobody except Jo Byuk would feel remorse over their deaths.

However the problem lay with Jo Byuk, because if he died then Sa Ma Chun would start investigating on who killed him. This was where I needed a scapegoat, and villain at that since Sa Ma Chun could take revenge. Although I knew it wasn't in Sa Ma Chun's character to take revenge or shed a tear at Jo Byuk's death, this was just a safety measure.

So I asked the Heavenly Net Guild's to investigate deeper into Jo Byuk and everything that was related to him.

He gave the Three Rogues hundreds of nyang without a care even

though he wouldn't be getting the money from Sa Ma Chun since this mission was cancelled.

Which made me wonder where he got this money from.

Did he save them from his previous life? Of course not.

Since I asked the Heavenly Net Guild to expedite the investigation, the price of was three times the original. I gave back over half the money I received from when I sold the fake piece of information. This was how the flow of money and information circulated.

I wasn't worried or regretful of spending this much money since it originally didn't belong to me and I could send all of them to hell.

Of course, throughout this process I had worn different face-alteration mask each time. Aside from when I went to the Wind Tavern, or back into my inn to sleep, I always wore a face-alteration mask.

Coming out of the Heavenly Net Guild I realized the importance of having my own information network. I couldn't always buy information like this. Since the big three information merchants were pretty big and famous they wouldn't try to deceive their clients, but anything can happen in this world.

If I wanted to raise the strength of my Clan, having a strong

information network was fundamental. Since I watched Kal Sa Ryang operate the True Heart Sect for the longest time I knew how difficult it was to maintain and operate one.

First, you needed spies and infiltrators who would gather information. Then you must have some managers who will oversee their work and give them missions, this was the role of the True Heart Sect. Since the Alliance recruited spies from within the Alliance itself it didn't need much; however, we were different, since we don't have such backing. We needed people who could rescue the spies when they were in a bind.

Raising spies was harder than raising martial artists; since they dealt with classified information they must be totally loyal to you. As I was going to have spies everywhere in Central Plain I needed a decent sum of money. This was truly a challenging problem.

“You are late today,” Baek Pyo greeted with a smile.

“There were some things that I had to take care of, so I was pretty busy.”

“It's good to be busy.”

“Is it really? I like to relax. I just don't want to do anything.”

“Ha Ha Ha. It just shows you that you are still young.”

I laughed with Baek Pyo, “So I sent a message back home to send someone. It’s pretty boring by myself.”

The person I asked to send was Kwang Du.

Before coming here I sent Jung Yeo a message through one of the Yang Clan’s courier who was stationed here.

Before coming here, I had ordered Jung Yeo to create a carrier in Mu Han since this was where the Murim Headquarters were located and since I would be coming here more frequently.

The carrier was operated by a trained martial artist of the Yang Clan and I sent a coded message to Jung Yeo.

There were two things that I requested: One was to send two trained spies here and the other was to send Kong Su Chan and Kwang Du here secretly.

After eliminating those four I didn’t know how the situation was going to unfold, so I decided to stay here for a bit longer, and see things through the end. Also, I wanted to see Kwang Du and needed him for something I sent for him.

As for Kong Su Chan, I had something in mind for him. I planned on creating a store here in Mu Han. Since I didn’t want it to be related to the Byuk Clan I was going to make an independent merchant, so that we could earn money while creating a base here.

If it was another place it may not have been worth it; however, this place was Mu Han, the center of Murim Alliance, so it is definitely worth the investment.

Baek Pyo said jokingly, “More the merrier so that I could make more money and get rich faster.”

“Yes, we would be merrier.”

“Ha ha ha”

I was joking around with Baek Pyo.

Baek Pyo-ya, no matter what hardship you may face, just laugh like this and all things will come to pass.

At the same time, Ma Chul Goon entered the Mengju Pavillion.

He was Ma Bong Gi's fifth son, but he was currently the acting head of the Heavenly Dao Gate. He was tall, handsome, and charismatic, making him not look someone in his forties. He was the perfect example of a descendant of the top clans.

Sitting on the Mengju's Chair, Ma Bong Gi watched Ma Chul Goon approach him.

Ma Chul Goon stopped about ten paces away from the Mengju's Chair. Even though it had been quite some time since they last met, this was a fairly large distance considering that they were father and son.

“Have you been sir?”

“Have you come?”

“You seem better than ever sir.”

“You seem well as well.”

“How does it feel being at the peak sir?”

“It's more of a headache.”

Even though the conversation sounded natural, it felt really business like.

“I took care of Jun Soo's funeral.”

This was the reason why Ma Chul Goon visited Ma Bong Gi. Although he was only his half-brother, they were still of the same blood.

“Good.”

“I told the others but ... no one else came.”

Ma Bong Gi just nodded.

“I heard that Jung Soo’s death was related to the Dark Guild. Don’t you think it is necessary to send someone? What if they do this sort of thing again?”

“I have already sent someone.”

“Who did you send?”

Ma Bong Gi changed the subject

“You must be tired from your trip. Go and rest”

“Then I will excuse myself.”

Just as Ma Chul Goon bowed and was about to leave, Ma Bong Gi called him, “Goon-ah.”

“Yes”

Ma Bong Gi was about to say what was in his heart but decided not to and said, “When will you plan on returning home?”

“Since I am here, I there are people that I must meet and some business that I must take care of.”

“I understand.”

Ma Chul Goon bowed again and left the pavilion.

Ma Bong Gi had a complicated feeling as he watched Ma Chul Goon leave the room.

Then Sa Ma Chun entered the pavilion.

Although Sa Ma Chun may be lacking in the intelligence department, he was a professional at reading people's expressions, especially Ma Bong Gi's. He knew what Ma Bong Gi was thinking just by the sound of his breath.

“Will you like me to accompany you for a drink?”

“Let us then.”

Ma Bong Gi left his seat and entered the secret chamber behind the Mengju's chair with Sa Ma Chun. This was a room that was exclusive only to the Mengju.

After going down a flight of stairs, there was a large room. Originally it was a training room used by Chun Ha Jin; however,

now it looked completely different. It was now decorated with paintings, extravagant furniture, and decorations. At the center of the room, there was a bed large enough to fit more than ten people. Now, this was Ma Bong Gi's private bedroom.

The person who planned this was Sa Ma Chun. Since he was young he offered Ma Bong Gi many women, and after he became the chancellor, this was the first thing that he created.

He quickly set up the table for alcohol.

"They are ignoring me. They have been ignoring me since they were young."

"How could they sir?"

"Ha."

He was someone who knew Ma Bong Gi's feeling, so although Ma Bong Gi cursed at his sons he knew that Ma Bong Gi's favorite was Ma Chul Goon.

Since Ma Bong Gi loved his son so much he recalled all the misgiving and trouble that his son caused.

If Sa Ma Chun truly counseled Ma Bong Gi and tried to appease them, then the two of them would have a better relationship. However, Sa Ma Chun didn't do that since he wanted Ma Bong Gi to rely on him the more Ma Bong Gi felt depressed.

Then the door opened and three beauties entered.

“At times like this it is best to empty your mind and just have fun.”

“You and you, come here!”

He sat the two of them on either side of him and started smiling at Sa Ma Chun.

Sa Ma Chun laughed and drank with him, showing that he was satisfied with only a single beauty.

There were two people waiting for Ma Chul Goon outside the Mengju Pavillion. One person was Elder No, who was Ma Chul Goon’s longtime advisor and teacher. He was someone that Ma Chul Goon trusted the most.

The other person was someone that Ma Bong Gi attached to him. While Number Seven was attached to Ma Jung Soo. Number Three was attached to Ma Chul Goon. Since he was Ma Chul Goon’s guard he was able to enter into the inner parts of the Murim Alliance.

“Have you told him?” Elder No asked

Ma Chul Goon shook his head and said, “No.”

“You must go back and tell him.”

Ma Chul Goon just nodded but didn't have any intention of going back.

I ran up the mountain to train before I retired into my bed.

The first thing that I trained was the external practices. Although internal practices might be important, the most important thing for the martial artist was their body.

Since the Practices of the White Crane was a martial art that used the whole body, it was even more important to train the body.

Although I didn't have too great of an insight into it, I was just copying it.

It wasn't easy trying to copy what was written in the manual.

After using my whole body to train, I felt refreshed. Or maybe it was because of the changes that a new martial art gave me.

Although this was a good feeling, I didn't plan on changing my personal martial art.

My lifelong goal was to achieve the Spirit Sword.

There were two reasons as to why I was practicing this martial art. The first one was because it was practical. Although it rarely happened, if I lost my sword I would have to fight barehanded. Who knows if this would one day save my life?

The other reason was because of what Number Seven said. What Number Seven said to me that day enlightened me. ‘The Strongest Under the Heaven wouldn’t think like that’. He would be above the norm and try something different. Although I believed that Sword Arts and Fist Arts couldn’t be in harmony with each other, she had me consider otherwise.

That was when I had an epiphany. Something took root at that time. I was like a frog in a well, becoming too complacent with what I was comfortable with. So I was stuck in that place for so long. Originally I believed that this martial art couldn’t be incorporated into the sword arts since it used the whole body as a weapon. I would have to develop unnecessary muscles that weren’t needed for the sword arts. However, since I was the Strongest Under the Heaven I couldn’t be bound by these beliefs.

I believed that by combining the sword art and this fist art it would allow me to break through my goal.

Bang Bang Bang!

I sent my fist, knees, elbows, and foot strikes into the air. I was as fluid as water, ever changing my attack.

The true intention of Practices of the White Crane was freedom.

The next day I received information on Jo Byuk from the Heavenly Net guild.

They were able to dig deeper into the things that he was involved in.

To find a decent scapegoat was almost impossible since he killed anyone that was on wrong terms with him. They would die a couple of months later, or a couple of years later, but one thing was in common. They were all dead.

From this I knew he sent the Three Rogues Three to eliminate them. He eliminated everyone who might be a threat to him.

Such an evil person.

Another thing that I learned from this was that he someone who spent lavishly. When he went out for a drink he would only drink the best wine out there, and when he went to Gieseng House he would only take the best women.

He was spending more money than he could make as Sa Ma Chun's right-hand man.

Which means he must have some sort of money source.

If I could find that I would be able to finish this cleanly.

Once he lost his money, any type of story can be made.

A strong breeze blew through the streets while I was walking back to the inn. It was pretty cold. It seems that the fall is coming to an end and winter will arrive soon.

“It will get cold soon.”

I wanted to live a carefree life, but Kang Ho keeps bringing me back in.

Chapter 63: You Don't Know Anything(2)

I wanted to coerce Jo Byuk into giving me information but he didn't come out of the Alliance.

The True Heart Sect which is now run by Sa Ma Chun was in the inner part of the Alliance, so even I couldn't easily sneak in there. With how much Ki I have, I probably could attempt it now, but there was still a high possibility that I would be caught.

It wasn't likely that Jo Byuk's source of money was near the Alliance since he could get caught. But even if there was something there he wouldn't be stupid enough to be caught red-handed.

And that must mean that his source is money is so well hidden that not even the Heavenly Net Guild nor the other top information guilds could find any clues about it.

So I decided to dig deeper into the Three Rogues.

If Jo Byuk was like Sa Ma Chun's arm, then the Rogue Three were like the fingers. Since they have been working for Jo Byuk for a long time, they were bound to know a thing or two.

I infiltrated the Gieseng House that they were staying at. This Gieseng House had over twenty five rooms, with over fifty Giesengs. This could be considered a medium-sized one, and the three of them had already visited four of the twenty five rooms.

After playing and drinking alcohol for the night they went back to their room during the day and they played and drank at night again. They were truly enjoying their lives in the Gieseng House.

I sneaked into their room and hid in the ceiling listening to their conversation. Although it was cramped, reeked of alcohol, and had bugs crawling everywhere I couldn't drop my guard for a moment. But I didn't have to worry about getting caught since I could just kill them all if I got discovered.

This was the first time that I was doing something so ridiculous. I would have never even thought of something like this in my previous life even if I had the opportunity.

The reason why I was hiding like this and holding back my anger was because of Baek Pyo. I wanted to protect his current lifestyle. Since he had been protecting me for so long in my previous life, I guess the heavens are allowing me to protect him in this life. To protect me, Baek Pyo did things like what I am doing right now and even more. He hid in walls, cramped corridors, and ceilings so that he could come out at a moment's notice.

From this place I learned many things about the three of them. The one with a lot of hair was Rogue One, the one who had the big build was Rogue Two, and the other one was Rogue Three. Rogue One and Rogue Three used a sword as their weapon while Rogue Two used a mace.

Surprisingly, these three revealed all sort of secrets. First, they told stories about when they first

met, then they proceeded to tell who they robbed and killed. They didn't hold anything back even though there were Gieseng next to them.

Although they were only a bit drunk, they had the guts to reveal everything because they believed that these Giesengs wouldn't reveal anything.

I remembered something Kal Sa Ryang had said before, "Although it is difficult to manage the True Heart Sect, it is much simpler to manage the regular information guilds. When men become drunk they usually want to show off in front of women. Since that is the nature of men, the Gieseng house is a place filled with information."

Around midday, the moment that I was waiting for finally arrived.

"I can't take this place anymore, this place is getting boring," Said Rogue Two as he got up from one of the Gieseng's legs.

Then Rogue One replied with a grin, "Hearing you say it's getting boring playing with women makes you sound like it's almost your time to go."

"We stayed here until it became boring. We should go there."

"Where?"

“You already know.”

Then Rogue One shook his head, “It’s ok, if you’re bored then drink more alcohol and go to sleep.”

“Don’t be like that and let’s go. We haven’t been there in a while.”

“Didn’t the boss say to minimize our appearances?”

“He wouldn’t have been able to start this without our help. Stop saying we shouldn’t go and let’s go.”

I got excited. When they said boss it most likely would be Jo Byuk. Which meant this was some secret related to Jo Byuk.

Rogue Three remained neutral since he was the youngest but it seemed that he wanted to side with his big brother and not go.

The three of them eventually left.

The place that they arrived at was a place not far from their current location. It was a narrow road which was hidden from the main road, so unless you knew where you were going you were bound to get lost.

Although it was deep into the night, when they knocked on the

door someone from the inside answered immediately, “Who is it?”

“It us.”

Because there was no response Rogue Two yelled, “You better open this door before I make you a new one!”

They immediately opened the door realizing who it was.

“Why have you come here without any notice, sir?”

Although he greeted them it seemed that he didn’t want to welcome them.

Then Rogue Two said with a smile, “Have you ever been folded in half before? Not like this, but like that.”

As he was talking he displayed the movement of bending the back the other way with his hand.

With a disgusted expression he guided them, “Follow me.”

“Brat, you should have said that sooner.”

The three of them followed the man inside.

The inside was normal like every other house. Then they came to

a stop in a corridor between two rooms. When the man touched the candle holder attached to the wall, the wall opened.

Most people would have a secret corridor behind a bed, a desk, or a bookshelf but this was out in the open which made it less obvious.

After going through the corridor there was a large hall. There were about five tables filled with alcohol, food, drink and people. And the maids were busy filling the cups.

It somewhat seemed like a Gieseng house but it also looked like a tavern. It was like a Gieseng house since there were Giesengs playing and pouring men alcohol, but it was also like a tavern because everything was happening in public.

However, the biggest difference between a normal Gieseng house and this place was, this place used young girls to serve their food and alcohol. They seemed to be only in their teens and they were being forced to do these sorts of work.

After scanning the room they said, “It seems like the business is going well. Our boss seems to be earning lots of money.”

Just like what Rogue One said the five tables were filled with guests.

“Why don’t you increase the tables?”

“Don’t they say it’s human nature? If they could come in so easily they would get bored fast.”

“Our boss really knows how to use his head.”

“Hey isn’t she the one from before? She seems to have gotten bigger.”

“Yes she is. Since her sister woke up we had to kill her parents remember?”

“She grew into a fine young lad.”

“Don’t they say that kids grow fast. Hey bitch, don’t grow too fast. Or you will die.”

The three of them started laughing at the same time.

So this was Jo Byuk’s secret source of revenue.

The girls here were slaves kidnapped from various parts of the Central Plains.

All the customers here were rich old men who wanted to lust after young ones. Jo Byuk should be making considerably more money than a normal Gieseng house since he only attracted people from the rich.

When they first opened this place, the Three Rogues were the ones who kidnapped the girls here.

Since they wanted keep this place a secret there were only four guards including the one who opened the door.

“I was hoping that a spot would open up.” They were all dissatisfied that there wasn’t any space left.

“Lets go. Lets sleep on the breasts of real women. And we need to start working tomorrow since we are running out of money.”

“Although there is nothing like these fresh ones it will do for now.”

“Stupid bitch!”

Then the man who opened the door brought up a girl to the stage. She only looked twelve years old.

“Now, here is the main event. She arrived today. Of course, she is someone who is inexperienced.”

The old men were whistling and cheering.

The man who brought her onto the stage was stripping off her clothes.

“Now, I’ll start at five hundred.”

When the girls arrived they would be sold like this.

A few people started raising the price. Every time someone raised their hand it raised by another hundred nyang.

It passed one thousand nyang and reached two thousand nyang.

“Look at her skin. Its softer and whiter than anything.”

It eventually stopped at seven thousand five hundred nyang. It was a considerable amount of money.

“If no one else beats that price at the count of three this auction will conclude.”

“One, Two,…”

Then I yelled, “One million nyang.”

Everyone was surprised and looked at where the voice came from.

Everyone’s sight was on me.

“How could she be worth a million nyang?” The old man who

was about the buy her questioned me.

Then I replied with a cold glance, “Will you sell you granddaughter for seven thousand five hundred nyang?”

The old man couldn't say anything and looked at the man on the stage since he realized the person he was dealing with was a Kang Ho-in.

Then the man on the stage gave a glance at one of the guards, and two guards rushed at me.

I easily dodged their swords and broke one of their necks.

Crack!

He fell down as soon as his neck broke.

I choke-slammed the other one into the ground.

Boom! His spine broke with a loud noise.

After seeing the two guards being taken out so fast, the man on the stage looked at the Three Rogues.

The three of them quickly came before me.

Rogue Two turned his head and said to the other, “I told you we should come here. What would have happened if we weren’t here?”

Then Rogue One yelled, “Watch...!”

Without giving him the chance to finish I quickly struck Rogue Two in the head. The moment he turned around I struck.

Bang! It sounded like something exploded in his head. And he dropped to the floor.

Without giving a second thought I stomped on his head.

Boom!

His skull shattered to pieces. After his body twitched for a second his movements came to a stop. He didn’t even have the opportunity to use his mace.

Looking down at the corpse I said in a cold tone, “Where are you looking at when your opponent is in front of you?”

The technique that I used to take him down so easily was Practices of the White Crane.

Rogue One and Rogue Three were looking at me with a blank expression. They were shocked that Rogue Two was taken down so

quickly. Although he was ambushed, he was someone who had the strongest body out of them all, they couldn't believe that he died with only two attacks.

After they finished exchanging glances with one another, they rushed forward at me together.

I dealt with them using the White Crane Art. I dodged their swords and approached them. Since they were not expecting me to do this, I was able to align my shoulder right behind Rogue One's back and struck.

With a loud noise I attacked him with my shoulder and he was pushed back a couple of steps.

When he tried to attack me again all he could do was scream.

“Kahhh!”

With my last attack I had shattered his back.

Biting his teeth, he tried to attack me again but this time I grabbed his neck.

Crack!

He died on the spot when I twisted his neck.

When I was done with Rogue One I looked at Rogue Three.

“Spare me! I’ll just go.”

Since he didn’t hear my response after he dropped his weapon, he ran towards the door afraid.

I kicked the sword that was on the ground.

Fwiiing! Stab!

The sword penetrated his back and came out the other side. After gasping for air, he finally fell.

The man who was selling the girl was nowhere to be seen. He left the scene as soon as I got into it with the Three Rogues. He needs to stay alive so that he can bring me the final person that was going to die tonight.

While I was waiting for Jo Byuk I started beating the daylight out of the old buffoons.

Smack! Smack! Smack!

After having their teeth broken and their arms broken, these old buffoons begged for their lives, “Please spare us!”

I didn't say that I was going to kill them but they still begged to be spared.

“Alright I'll grant you your wish.”

Smack! Smack! Smack!

I beat them up pretty well. I didn't kill them but I half killed them. Was it really worth my time to kill these old fools?

I was going to reveal what happened here to the world. Their family would probably find out and they will spend the rest of their life rotting in prison. Since I broke all their teeth, they probably would have to live off porridge or grits. I gave them an option to live but it was a miserable and torturous life until they died.

The girls were in one corner looking at what was happening. They looked scared.

I asked them, “Do you want to see you mother?”

Most of the girls were crying.

“I'll send you all home.”

I felt sad for these girls.

‘I am sorry. I am truly sorry.’

The wounds and scars that they received here would remain with them until they die. They were forced here and were forced to do these things when they didn’t know anything.

I didn’t know if they could live a normal life again. But the reason why I showed them the beating of those old fools was because I wanted to show them that they received the punishment that they deserved. Although it might not heal their scars, I was sure it was going to help them in the future.

Creak!

The door opened. It seemed as if Jo Byuk had arrived.

So, watch carefully. Watch what happens once that door opens.

Chapter 64: You Don't Know Anything (3)

Jo Byuk's face darkened as he saw the interior of his shop.

The situation was much worse than he had expected.

From what he heard, he believed that a guard that followed one of the old men caused a scene. And he also learned the Three Rogues were there, so he believed that they would be able to bring the situation under control since they would be able to handle most experts.

However, after seeing their corpses lying on the ground and seeing the old men lying on the ground half-dead his face looked grim.

And in the middle of the room there was a man he had never seen before.

“Where are you from?” His voice was full of nervousness. Since even he was unable to beat the three of them when they were working together. In other words this person was stronger than he was.

“I came into this dirty place by chance.”

The reason why I answered like this was for later. Since it was important to make them believe that a Kang Ho-in that was just passing by caused this scene.

Since Jo Byuk was desperate he tried using this method to save himself.

“Do you know whose backing I have?”

I answered him with a grin, “Does he know that you run this sort of dirty place?”

Jo Byuk’s face froze at this moment. If Sa Ma Chun knew about this place he would be in big trouble. The profit from this was pretty good and if Sa Ma Chun learned of this place he would try to take everything from him.

I laughed at him as I stared at him.

You don’t know anything. How deep is the anger I have against you?

You don’t have the right to trample these girls’ future. Your existence is no better than the dust on those girl’s feet.

I was angry at the fact that he kidnapped these innocent kids and sold them into slavery. I was even more angry about the fact that he was going to act against Baek Pyo and his family.

If you can’t help those girls then you should just let them go about their business not kidnap them.

“What do you want? Is it money?”

This was the limit of his thought process, since if he attacked a place like this, the thing that he would ask for was money.

Seeing that I didn't say anything, he thought I was giving him some signal.

“I can give you a part of the profit. Ten percent? Thirty? I'll give you what you want. Look at those kids!”

He was pointing at the girls. I could sense that they became afraid from just one of his stares. I got a sense of what he did to them.

“There are a lot of kids like that in Kang Ho. Also, there are a lot of old men who want those kids. We could make millions.”

I remained silent.

He smiled trying to lighten up the mood, “I'll give you the best opportunity to experience them when they are freshly caught. I could give a few of them to you whenever they are caught.”

These people are the worst of the worst.

I answered him with a smile, “Did you ask me what I wanted?”

“Just tell me, anything I can do.”

“The thing I want is... It’s hard to tell with words, so I’ll show it to you personally.”

I approached him slowly. Realizing that I wasn’t getting close to give him a handshake, he drew his sword.

“Son of a bitch! You should have just taken the opportunity that I gave you! Just die!”

Shiing!

He charged at me swinging his sword. His attack was fast and deadly, worthy to be called Sa Ma Chun’s right hand man. But I simply dodged using the footwork taught in the White Crane Art.

There was a definite difference between my personal technique, the Ashura Soul Chasing Art, and this White Crane Art. Thus, I was experimenting the differences as I was fighting him right now.

Since I allowed Jo Byuk some room he grew arrogant, “You aren’t much.”

Then he started going all out, using all of his strongest attacks. I would have wanted to experiment the White Crane Art against him a bit more if we were alone, but since I was afraid that the girls

could get hurt I ended this quickly.

I dodged the blade and got close to him.

Smack!

His face turned the other way after I punched him.

As I was about to throw another punch he sprayed something that he held in his hand.

Some powder landed on my face.

Jo Byuk stepped back a couple of paces. Seeing that he was holding his breath, it must be a very potent poison. With a single breath I sucked in the powder since I was afraid that the girls might breath it in.

Jo Byuk had a satisfied look on his face, “You idiot! Do you know what kind of poison that is? You are going to die a painful death... but how come ... How come you are not dying?”

Seeing his laughter stop, this time I laughed at him, “You must have bought a counterfeit.”

I was now certain that I had achieved the poison-immune physique. Since that poison it was no better than flour against me as it didn't disturb my flow. No, flour might have blinded me for a

second.

I flew next to him. But this time he revealed his killing intent and threw three hidden weapons.

Swoosh, Swoosh, Swoosh

I deflected them with my bare hands. The three daggers were now stuck on the wall. Being able to deflect swords and throwing weapons barehanded without getting hurt was also part of the White Crane Art.

He tried to stab me again but I knocked the blade off his hand.

Break!

His wrist twisted the other way.

“Ahhhh!” He was screaming while he grabbed his broken hand.

I followed up with an attack on his ribs with my knees.

Smack!

His scream grew louder.

The girl's faces were brighter than ever. Seeing their expression,

I understood what sort of hardship they went through.

Yes, you wouldn't be satisfied with just this. Watch carefully.

Smack! Smack!

My first punch found its mark on his nose as it broke and the second one landed on his jaw knocking out the rest of his teeth.

“... Please spare m...”

He tried begging but I wouldn't let him off like that.

Crack!

This time I stepped on his shin and broke it

“Ahhhhh!”

Everyone could hear what sort of pain he was going through.

I wanted to make him suffer as much as possible right now since I wanted the kids to remember this.

Smack!

With my elbow I dislocated his jaw completely.

He probably wanted to fall down but he couldn't and I continuously hit him.

Punch! Smack! Punch! Smack! Punch!

Since it was so fast the girls couldn't see it properly. However, every time I made contact a part of him broke.

He finally fell down as more than half of the bone in his body were grounded into dust and the light in his eyes was almost dim. Then I took a step back and delivered the final blow

Boooom!

With this final blow his face became completely disfigured. (TL note: man that's brutal. This is even worse than the tokyou ghoul torture scene where kaneki says he is going to half kill him.)

“You should share your profits with the devil in hell.”

Of course his profits will be punishment and torment.

Then something caught my eyes. There was something around his neck. So I picked it up.

It was a necklace with the shape of an arrowhead. When I turned it I was able to open it and there was a small piece of paper inside of it. It had numbers and words that I didn't understand, meaning it was some sort of a code. Although I didn't know what it was, I was certain that I was important.

The girls were alternating their glances between me and the corpses. Whenever they looked at me they had a thankful look, whereas whenever they looked at the corpse they had a look of disgust.

I walked toward the table and gathered the bags that were full of money. It seems that these old men brought that money for the auction.

Then I distributed them to the girls. They received the money with a scared look on their faces.

"I am not giving you this to forgive theù, I am giving it to you since it belongs to you."

Then one of the girls said, "It's dirty money."

"It is not dirty, money is just money."

"I don't want it! Seeing this money brings back bad memories."

She threw the money on the ground. Then I picked it back up and placed it in her hand.

“No, even if you don’t receive this money you will still remember it.”

Regret filled her eyes and she started crying.

Yes, how can they forget about this place?

Human emotions are a very fragile things. Once something happen to them, they would never be able to forget it.

“Just take it. If you don’t want it right now you can bury it for later. And if you still don’t want it then you can throw it away.”

I was certain that this money would be of use to them in the future.

They stared at me and started gathering around me.

“In your life you will meet good people and you will meet bad people. You just met the bad ones first. You are bound to meet good ones in the future.”

I just wanted them to get over their pain and be able to live a better life in the future. As an adult I felt sad and bad for these children since I couldn’t do anything for them when I was still alive. If there was a heaven I hoped that it would help these children.

Half an hour later, I watched on top of a tree as members of the Alliance moved into the area. The girls will be taken back home and those old fools will be taken into custody. This was too big of a crime to get out of using their money and influence. Although Ma Bong Gi was rotten to the core the Alliance was not. This was the Alliance that I created after years of hard work. Since Ma Bong Gi became the new Mengju for less than a year he wouldn't have had the time or the influence to change its roots.

Sa Ma Chun wouldn't investigate further into the death of Jo Byuk. Rather than investigating he might even become disgusted at Jo Byuk for doing something like this behind his back.

Through this I was able to secure the safety of Baek Pyo and his family.

A few days later, under the darkness of the night a man dressed in full black jumped over a wall. This place was Jo Byuk's secret auction place and this man was the very man who was conducting the auction. He was able to enter this place using the secret passage a couple of days after the people from the Alliance left.

The broken furniture and dried blood on the floor reminded him of what happened that day.

He left the main hall using one of the backdoors and entered a room. This room was where brooms, mops and other cleaning

supplies were stored. Since it was dirty and had a nasty smell he believed that no one would enter this place.

Then he pushed one of the boxes and opened the secret door on the wall. There was some sort of lock on it but he opened it with ease.

He was laughing as he entered this place, “HAHAHA, now everything is mine.”

This place was the secret storage where money and various of other precious materials were stored.

The man’s expression darkened and he slowly turned his head.

His face turned pale and he couldn’t do anything but be scared since the person behind him was me.

“... You expected me to come here...”

I just nodded as I stood behind him.

“Jo Byuk probably didn’t have time to count all of this right?”

Since Jo Byuk was busy doing all sorts of things for Sa Ma Chun he probably wouldn’t have time for it. He probably wouldn’t come here everyday to collect money but come once a month to collect a large sum. So that’s why this secret storage was created since he

needed a place to store the money that he received. And he must have had someone trustworthy to handle this place.

“He usually takes it every two months.”

Of course he would. He wasn't someone who would trust anyone.

“Please spare me.”

“Spare you?”

“Yes”

“If you weren't greedy and didn't come here you could have lived for another fifty years.”

Stab!

My sword struck his chest and he fell without a word.

“Your reward for showing me this place is a painless death.”

I knew that he was going to come back to this place so I didn't kill him back then and waited for his return. Was I the sort of person who wasn't thorough when taking care of business?

There were all sorts of things here. I collected all the banknotes

first. There was a total of eighty thousand nyang. He probably hid the rest somewhere else. And the necklace must be a clue to that place.

Since everything here was done under the table, the currency that they used here was all traceless bank notes, so I knew I could use them without repercussion.

There were some items that caught my attention like some throwing knives. Seeing that they were in good condition I picked them up and put it in my bag. Since I mastered the White Crane Art there weren't many occasions where I would need to use these, but I was going to keep some of them just in case.

The next thing that I picked up was medicine. It was the best of the best that there was. I thought, 'He really know how to treat himself.'

Since I had enough medicine for myself from the time that I looted Ma Jung Soo I planned on giving this to Kwang Du and the rest.

Counting the money that I already had in the bank I now had two hundred and eighty thousand nyang.

Now my financial situation has become stable, not only that I also achieved the Poison Immune Physique, my internal energy had risen to nearly a hundred years' worth and I had mastered some new techniques.

I was only getting stronger.

Chapter 65: When The First Snow Falls Again (1)

The next day the people I was expecting arrived.

“Youunnnnnng Massteeerrrr!”

Kwang Du rushed at me as if he hadn’t seen me for dozens of years.

I stepped to the side and walked up to Kong Su Chan that was behind him.

“You must be tired from your journey.”

“Have you been well, sir?”

Kwang Du made a face of dissatisfaction seeing me greet Kong Su Chan first.

“Ehh, so you are taking care of your money first.”

“Hoho so you consider manager Kong as my wallet right?”

“No, that’s not what I meant.”

Kong Su Chan just gave the flustered Kwang Du a smile, “It’s all right.”

“No that’s not what I meant.”

“I am someone who manages money. I don’t feel bad being considered a wallet.”

“No that’s not what I meant but why are you like this? Didn’t we have a good time on our way here? Huh?”

Seeing Kwang Du here brightened my mood. This was a special trait about Kwang Du.

Kwang Du came next to me and said, “I understand why you took care of him first. You are the type that saves the best for last.”

“No I think you misunderstood me. I think if you save something for too long it would turn bad.”

With a frown Kwang Du pretended he hadn’t heard what I said to him.

“You must be tired from your journey. Lets eat first since you may be hungry.”

Seeing the dishes that were limited to Ho Buk, Kwang Du eyes brightened. I ordered them especially for him.

“Wow! It’s really good. This is definitely the capital. Nothing in San Dong can compare to this place!”

“Eat as much as you want! If you want more I will order it for you.”

“Young master! I only have you young master.”

After feeding them, we started talking.

“How are my parents doing?”

“They are doing well.”

“Don’t they miss me?”

“They didn’t say anything like that.”

“Hmph, they wouldn’t.”

“Since you are still young you don’t know. Parents also want their children to be independent from them. Until when will they take care of their child? You should go and look for them once in a while young master.”

“Hahaha.”

Since he attacked me I should return the favor. There was something that still poked a nerve.

“How is Do Soon-ee?”

“Ah, just as I was about to forget it, you remind me again.”

“How can you forget your first love?”

“I told you it’s not my first love.”

Kong Soo Chan was laughing next to me. It looked as if he would bet that it was Kwang Du’s first love.

“But young master, don’t you miss Lady Song?”

“Is she well?”

“She became more beautiful.”

“How do you know?”

“She came to see the mistress again.”

I felt thankful for her again since she was taking care of my

mother when I was away from home. But I already knew that she was doing this to look good in front of me. She was experiencing changes in her life. The part she considered irrelevant is now more relevant to her. Because of this she is taking care of my mother.

This is how changes are.

Once one thing changes, everything else changes.

After hearing the news about San Dong, I told them the reason why I brought them here.

“We are going to make a merchant guild.”

Kong Soo Chan nodded his head as if he was already expecting this.

“I was expecting you to say something like this since you brought me all the way here.”

“What do you think?”

“It isn’t easy creating a merchant guild. First we need a large investment.”

“I know. I don’t plan of making a big one at first. Let’s start with a small one first. But you have to take into account that we will be

ever-expanding.”

“Expanding as in?”

“I plan on having this guild in almost every city in the central plain. Although we may start small. This will be considered the root of this operation. I am saying to not make a straw house but make a house with a solid groundwork since we need a strong foundation.”

It may sound easy, but it was no small effort. Kong Soo Chang nodded slowly.

“I understand what you mean.”

There was strong expectation in Kong Soo Chan’s eyes. Maybe this was something that he dreamt of.

“And please make it so that we can communicate between here and San Dong.”

“Understood sir, leave it to me.”

“How much do you think you might need?”

“From my calculations in order to start we might need at least fifty thousand nyang and...”

I handed him a bank card. This was something that I had prepared beforehand.

“Here is hundred thousand nyang. Use that for now.”

Kong Soo Chan was surprised. Kwang Du who was standing next to us was even more surprised.

“Can I touch it?”

Kwang Du stroke the bank card.

If it was me from before, I would never have even thought of using the money that I stole from the villains. Since I thought that it was not just.

But those thoughts are now irrelevant since I will not repeat the past. There are many regrets and mistakes that I made back then.

Rather than dwelling in the past, I will pay more attention to my current life.

Although this money came from an evil place the money itself wasn't evil. Just the person who was using it. I didn't care how the money went back into circulation since Kang Ho wouldn't care how I spend it.

“This is enough sir. I could do everything you said and more with

it.”

“If you need some more please ask me and don’t be hesitant in using the money. I’ll leave everything in your capable hands.”

“Please leave it to me.”

Then I looked at Kwang Du and said, “So until this project is completed you will be his bodyguard.”

“Yes young master.”

Kwang Du said with a smile. He was happy that I was trusting him with such an important mission.

Kong Soo Chan got up from the seat.

“You should rest today and start tomorrow.”

“No. I am not the type to take a rest until something is finished.”

Kwang Soo Chan asked Kwang Du, “Will you be alright?”

“Of course. We will be back young master.”

The two of them left the inn. Seeing them walk out of here full of energy revitalized me.

The following night I took Kwang Du to the 'wind' tavern.

On the way there we saw a someone walking on the street. The person who was in the middle was Ma Chul Goon. There were many occasions where I saw him when I was still the Mengju. It really made me wonder how Ma Bong Gi could have a son like that. After exchanging a couple of words I came to realize how intelligent he was. But that was not all, his personality wasn't all that bad either. This was a mystery that I could never solve.

Anyway, when Ma Bong Gi became the Mengju, he became the acting master of Heavenly Dao Gate, but what was he doing here?"

Beside him as an old man and there were seven other experts behind him and I knew who they were.

They were the Heavenly Dao Gate's private guard the Seven Celestial Dragons. Originally they were Ma Bong Gi's personal guards but since he is now the Mengju he didn't need their protection so they were now protecting Ma Chul Goon. But the person that caught my attention wasn't them but the one behind them.

He had a cold and emotionless stare, reminding me of Number Seven.

So it's them.

I was certain that they were from the same organization.

They were not just attached to Ma Jung Soo but to the other successors as well. Seeing that they were attached to the different successors I was certain that it was an outside force. And that something or someone was pulling the strings

But I couldn't get involved with them just yet. 'Yes, go fight amongst yourself, since I will only get stronger.'

"What is it young master" Kwang Du asked carefully, seeing my serious face.

"It's nothing."

"If you need something young master you must tell me fist."

You punk you think I don't know your feelings.

"Alright, I'll call you first when I get into dangerous situation."

"You don't need to do that, there are other occasions when..."

I introduced Kwang Du to Baek Pyo.

“He is my subordinate Kwang Du. The person that I trust the most.”

This was the moment when I introduced the person who I trusted the most in my previous life to the person I trust the most in this life.

Although their characters were completely different. They had one thing in common which was that they were both very emotional.

Hearing me say that I trust him the most, Kwang Du jokingly said, “Thank you for taking care of my young master who may be lacking in many areas.”

Since this was their first encounter they just exchanged light greetings.

Since Baek Pyo wasn't the type to joke around he said, “Lacking? Thanks to master Byuk I had a very good time, and our revenue increased due to him.”

I took Kwang Du to where I usually sat and ordered my usual drink and snacks.

“Wow! This alcohol kills.” Kwang Du had a very surprised expression.

“Then... did you borrow money from the owner?”

Hearing this Baek Pyo started laughing.

Since arriving to Mu Han, I learned that Baek Pyo was a man with many smiles. If I remember correctly I don't recall him laughing when he was still my guard.

That night, after coming back to the inn, we had another drink together. We brought the snacks and drink to our room and started drinking. We were looking outside for quite sometime as we drank.

It was busy with people closing down their shops and going back to their home, people with swords on their belt rushing off to different places, there were different types of people.

The first one to break the silence was Kwang Du, "I finally understand why you like that place so much."

"Did I look like I enjoy that place?"

I was surprised, I thought I didn't show any emotion since we left early after a quick introduction.

"Do you not?"

"Why do you think that?"

"Because he is not an ordinary owner. His aura feels different

than regular owners. I don't think I could describe it with words. Anyway, I felt very safe around him."

I've been with him for so long I got numb to it, but since this was Kwang Du's first meeting with Baek Pyo he must have felt something from him.

I told Kwang Du about Baek Pyo. How he was the head guard for the previous Mengju, how I helped him and his family without him knowing. I told him how I felt about Baek Pyo without hiding anything since I didn't want to lie to Kwang Du.

I truly wanted to take Baek Pyo with me. I wanted to do anything to make him into my subordinate.

But I was unable to make my decision since I knew that the road that I was going to take was a hard and arduous one.

Regardless of my feelings, it wouldn't be easy to make him into my subordinate since he is someone who doesn't follow easily.

Since Kwang Du knows my feelings he said, "You should tell him that you helped him. How you saved his family."

"Why?"

"Why not? You should get his thanks."

“Get his thanks? You think I am that type of person.”

“Why, never know what he might say once you tell him? How do you know someone’s feelings?

You might end up not knowing but if you don’t tell them no one will know anything.”

“Wouldn’t it be cooler if you tell him instead of me?”

“Alright then young master. So that was the reason why you called me.”

“Ha Ha Ha.”

I poured him a drink.

“Young Master.”

“What?”

“After telling him everything tell him to come with you. When I saw you with him young master, you had this light in your eyes. This was the first time I have ever seen you like that when you look at somebody.”

“Different than when I look at you too?”

“I wouldn’t know that since you are looking at me.”

This was very hard for Kwang Du to say since he knew that his place would be smaller once Baek Pyo joins. He knew that the attention that he is getting will be divided.

But Kwang Du said this to comfort me.

“Alright, I’ll think about it.”

“You must.”

The cold breeze that was coming through the window signified that I the winter is coming.

After finishing our drink I laid on my bed but couldn’t go to sleep. I looked at Kwang Du that was across from me, but it seemed that he also couldn’t fall asleep. He must also have a lot to think about.

Making decisions like this was more difficult than fighting twenty or so experts.

With that, it grew deeper into the night.

Chapter 66: When The First Snow Falls Again (2)

“Defend! Whatever happens, you must defend!!”

Baek Pyo was screaming on top of his lungs, but his voice could not be heard. Everything was dreamlike and moved in slow motion.

There were enemies all around them and the members of the Fierce Guard Sect fell, one by one. Baek Pyo was wildly swinging his sword. There were too many of them. When he killed one person, two replaced him. As he saw his subordinates get taken down he wanted to go help them, but he simply couldn't since there were too many enemies.

“Mengju-nim? Where is the Mengju-nim?”

He screamed as loud as he could, but nothing came out of his throat. He was taking down his enemies to find his master. He was in an unrealistic state fighting hundreds of enemies as he watched his subordinates get killed one by one.

How long had it been?

Finally, Baek Pyo saw Chun Ha Jin's silhouette. He was sitting on his chair with his eyes closed.

Then the scenery changed and a silhouette started to approach Chun Ha Jin.

“No! I must protect him! I must protect Megju-nim!”

He was screaming at the top of his lungs as he rushed to that place. He was cutting down everything that got his way.

“NO! Please! Punks Get out of My way!”

However there didn't seem to be an end to them, and the shadow finally reached the chair that Chun Ha Jin was sitting in.

“Mengju-nim! Please get up! Please dodge it!”

But Chun Ha Jin still had his eyes closed, and the shadow took out what looked to be a sword.

“Noooo!”

Stab!

The shadow stabbed Chun Ha Jin in the chest and blood started spraying everywhere. Everything slowed down as this took place.

“Mengju-nim!”

Chun Ha Jin opened his eyes and looked at him. At that moment everything seemed to have sped up and his enemies around him broke through his defenses and stabbed him repeatedly

“Ahhhh!”

With a loud scream, he woke up from his nightmare.

His wife, Jung Young, who was next to him asked, “Honey? Are you alright?”

“I am alright!”

She got him a cup of water.

“Drink it.”

“Thank you.”

Jung Young watched her husband with a very serious expression. Her husband was having nightmares every day now.

When her husband said he was going to quit the Fierce Guard Sect, she didn't oppose him. She just wanted him to take a rest and let him pursue his passions. After that, he bought a restaurant and the house with the money that he saved when he was the head guard. She thought everything would become peaceful, but her husband was having nightmares every night.

“It’s already over.”

She hugged Baek Pyo from behind. She wanted to lighten her husband’s burden as much as she could.

“You don’t have to protect Mengju-nim anymore.”

She knew that her husband was feeling guilty for the death of the previous Mengju. She knew that her husband was hating himself every day.

“I am sorry.” Baek Pyo said with a sigh.

“It’s not your fault. So don’t be sorry. For me and ... for Mengju-nim.”

She just wanted her husband to get over it soon and become better.

The next day I didn’t go to the Wind Tavern. I still hadn’t made up my mind over Baek Pyo. Also, Kwang Du didn’t bring up anything about Baek Pyo and the Wind Tavern either. Kwang Du just helped Kong Soo Chan in the creation of the merchant guild, so I walked the streets alone.

If it was Kal Sa Ryang, I would have second thoughts about it. Since I have already made my decision about him.

When the time was right, I planned on making Kal Sa Ryang one of my subordinate.

But why was I so hesitant about Baek Pyo?

Maybe it was because of his family. I wanted his family to be happy as well. Thus, I was being hesitant.

If it was me from before how would I have proceeded this?

I probably would have done what I felt like without taking anything into consideration. Back then I didn't think much about other people's emotions, only my goal. Maybe it was because I was ignorant or maybe that was just how I was. All I thought about was getting stronger so I didn't look at anything else or anyone else around me. Even after I became the Strongest Under Heaven I didn't look back.

When I became the Mengju and waged the war on the Demon Sects I didn't look back. I was just looking forward at my goal, and everything around me was irrelevant.

I didn't know back then since that was how I was, but it is different now.

My feelings aren't the only ones that are important, I was also

taking into account Baek Pyo's feelings, Kwang Du's feelings, and everyone else's feelings.

Was he happy living as an owner of a tavern? Or would he be happy clashing swords again?

I was hesitant in my decision because I didn't want to make the wrong choice.

There were many things that I realized now that didn't occur to me before, but I was certain that there was a solution to this.

I stopped my stroll and looked into the mountain, 'Baek Pyo-ya, I don't know what to do.'

On the other side of the city, there was someone else who was also on a stroll. It was Ma Chul Goon. One could sense an aura of calmness and light around him showing the world that he was the most likely candidate to become the successor of the Heavenly Dao Gate.

How long had he stood here?

Then another person approached him. Surprisingly the person who approached him was the Murim Mengju, Ma Bong Gi.

“Have you come, father?”

“Why did you ask me to come here?”

“Because there are ears and eyes around the Alliance that we must be wary of.”

“Then you could have sent me a message.”

“This is something that I want to personally say to you. So I already scanned the area so that no one can listen to our conversation.”

Although there were guards around they were stations far enough so that they couldn't listen to the conversation.

“Father, please don't take what I am about to say the wrong way.”

“Go ahead.”

“What was the reason that you sent our brothers to different parts of the Central Plain?”

“Didn't I tell you when I sent you?”

“Are you truly testing the successors?”

“Yes.”

“Then why didn’t you send me?”

“Doesn’t someone have to take command of the tower?”

“Then is this part of my test as well?”

“You think it’s not?”

Ma Bong Gi was definitely lying. In his heart, he had already determined the next heir. The reason why he sent his sons away was so that Ma Chul Goon could solidify his strength in the Clan and expand Heavenly Dao Gate’s sphere of influence across the Central Plain.

To be on guard against the forces that made him the Mengju, he needed to strengthen his clan. Since the Alliance could turn against him whenever those forces wanted to act against him.

They probably knew that the reason why he sent his successors was to expand the power of the Clan. However, he didn’t mind if they knew it. What were they going to do about it? Were they going to stop it? Kill them? If they were going to kill him that easily they shouldn’t have made him the mengju.

The person who was in control now was Ma Bong Gi. He was not

going to be their puppet.

“What is it that you want?”

“Is there someone around you that is pulling the strings?”

Ma Bong Gi face grew cold and said, “Watch your mouth!”

“I just asked you if there was anyone pulling the strings father. You must tell me father. I am on your side.”

“And why do you think that?”

Ma Chul Goon stared at his father dumbfounded.

“What you think I can’t become the Mengju without someone pulling the string?”

“No that’s not what I meant. I don’t understand why the three pillar sects would support you?”

“If it was something else there might have been more drama, but picking the Mengju is a very important matter. And different things factor in.”

In the end, Ma Chul Goon lowered his head and said, “I am sorry for asking father.”

“I will say again there is no one pulling the string.”

“I will trust your words father. Then I will get going.”

Ma Chul Goon turned around and left. Seeing his son leave Ma Bong Gi's expression wasn't good, “Son of a...”

Teacher No asked, “How did it go?”

Ma Chul Goon said with a sigh, “He was hiding it till the end.”
Ma Chul Goon was certain there was someone pulling the string.

“What will you do now?”

Ma Chul Goon showed his teeth like a predator. This scene was completely contrasted his normal calm aura, his aura now was that of a cold killer.

“I must do something. I can't let them do as they please.”

The next day, the spies that Jung Yeo send arrived.

“I am Silver”

“I am Spoon”

Silver was someone in his forties while Spoon was in his twenties.

Their age and their looks were different. But the thing that they had in common was that they appeared normal. Too normal. When I first met them, they gave the feeling as if I had seen them somewhere before. However, I had never met them before. If more people were here and I was having a conversation with them, I wouldn't even notice them amongst the crowd.

“Will you follow me from now on?”

“I heard everything from Lord Jung. We will serve you faithfully master.”

“Good, then I will trust you.”

Since Jung Yeo sent them, they must have the skill. But I will still test them in the future.

“Use this money as you see fit, but make sure you never get discovered. If you need more you can always ask.”

They were moved since this was larger than they had expected.

“Thank You, Master”

I gave them their first order. It was to gather information about the Murim Alliance. Especially anything that was related to Sa Ma Chun and how he dealt with the death of Jo Byuk.

“Since our opponent is the Murim Alliance you should always be careful. Never try to overstep your limits to get more information. I don’t mind if you get a small amount of information, but safety is the key.”

“Yes understood.”

I sent the two of them. If they showed their loyalty I would use them to set up the information sect. Of course the head of the sect would be Kal Sa Ryang.

“Are you concerned about something?”

Kwang Du came back to his senses when Kong Soo Chan asked him a question.

When the two of them were eating at a restaurant, Kwang Du stopped eating and was in a deep thought.

“No, I am not.”

Kwang Du started eating his food again, “Where did you say you were going to go again?”

“Man Choon Merchants.”

“Let’s hurry and eat so we could go there.”

Kong Soo Chan was busy visiting place to place so that he could start up our merchant guild. One time he went into an inn, next he went into a merchant store. He visited the blacksmith, the gardens, and even the information merchants. Creating a merchant guild was truly a difficult task.

“You are truly impressive seeing how you take care of all these complicated matters.”

Kong Soo Chan just smiled and said, “It’s just practice. I think you are truly impressive Warrior Kwang.”

“I told you to not call me Warrior Kwang but younger brother.”

“Then why aren’t you saying brother to me?”

“That’s...”

He couldn’t say it because he was afraid that he was going to be a burden to Kong Soo Chan.

“I was doing this since I was young. It’s just second nature to me now. What truly impresses me is to do something that I have never done before fearlessly.”

Kong Soo Chan was surprised that Kwang Du was originally a servant before he picked up martial arts. He could believe that Kwang Du was still a novice since Kwang Du had the skills and the looks of a warrior.

Kwang Du just shook his head and said, “I shouldn’t be the one getting compliments. Without young master I would still be sweeping the yard.”

“I think both of you are impressive.”

“I think this is pretty good. Complimenting each other.”

Kong Soo Chan started laughing at Kwang Du’s jokes. Although he usually smiled he never laughed like this.

He was curious how one was able to turn a servant into a martial artist? Since these sort of things are a rarity. On their way here, he understood why Byuk Lee Dan kept Kwang Du close by him. It was because Kwang Du had a certain charisma around him.

“Manager Kong.” Kwang Du looked out the window and asked, “I think I might cause a little accident, what should I do?”

Kong Soo Chan didn’t ask for the details and said: “Then go do

it.”

Kwang Du looked at him with a wide eye, “I should?”

“Do you really want to do it? If there an itch you should scratch it so that you don’t regret it in the future.”

“Were you someone like this. Who don’t plan ahead?”

“No, I am a very calculating person.”

“Then why?”

“Since it doesn’t concern me.”

Kong Soo Chan started laughing at Kwang Du’s face

“And if you already know what you are going to do then it’s not an accident. So you should do it.”

After a few minute Kwang Du got up his seat, “We should get going.”

“Yes”

Kong Soo Chan could sense it, that Kwang Du made up his mind.

Chapter 67: When The First Snow Falls Again (3)

The spies that I sent, Silver and Spoon, returned after completing their mission.

“All the girls that were held captive due to Jo Byuk have returned home. All the old rats who were caught were thrown in jail. Not only that, everyone who used that place was thrown in jail. It seems as if they received a life sentence. The place that they were sent to is full of criminals so they won’t make it too long.”

I was satisfied with the news. The core of the Murim Alliance still hadn’t turned bad.

However, slowly as years pass it will change. How could the water in the bottom of the mountain be clear if the top is polluted? Things would change over time.

“Can you get any information on the things that Jo Byuk did for Sa Ma Chun?”

“It will take some time but it is possible.”

Jo Byuk probably did a lot for Sa Ma Chun. There must be some evidence supporting this. If I am able to obtain it. I could use it against Sa Ma Chun in the future. Of course, I wouldn’t use it right now but when it was crucial.

“Always be careful.”

“Yes, sir.”

“At the same time can you look further into the Alliance?”

“Understood.”

“But good work.”

“No need to compliment us.”

I liked the way they worked. They were fast and reliable. But I was going to watch and test them more.

After my meeting with Silver and Spoon, I went to Kong Soo Chan. He was looking over documents in his room.

“It is going well?”

“Yes, I am taking everything into consideration. As you can see...”

“No, I didn’t come for that. I will leave everything in your capable hands.”

“Then why have you come here, sir?”

“Have you seen Kwang Du today? I haven’t seen him all day today.”

Since he sent Kwang Du to guard Kong Soo Chan, he assumed that he was here.

“I haven’t seen him either.” There was a slight hesitation in his answer.

“Alright”

Just as I was about to leave he said, “Young master.”

“Yes.”

After some hesitation he said, “What would happen if Warrior Kwang caused an incident? Would it be a major problem?”

When Baek Pyo came out of his shop to open it for the day, he saw someone standing across the street. It was Kwang Du.

“I came here since I remembered this place.”

“Did you come alone?”

“Yes”

“Come in then.”

Kwang Du entered and sat in the place the Byuk Lee Dan usually sits.

Baek Pyo quickly went inside and started preparing for the day. Since he was quick with his hands everything was ready rather fast.

Kwang Du just quietly watched as Baek Pyo cleaned up. But Baek Pyo’s movements weren’t that of a normal owner.

“Should I give you the one that you had before?”

“Yes, I would appreciate it. And can you give me the snack from last time as well?”

Baek Pyo brought the alcohol.

“I am glad to hear that you enjoyed it.”

“My young master talks about you all the time.”

“About me? What does he say about me?”

“That you are a great person to meet.”

“Haha, I think he is complimenting me too much.”

“What do you think about my master?”

“Master Byuk? Without a second thought I know he is a great person.”

“He is right? He is a great person.”

“Yes.”

Before he got here. He was planning to make this very businesslike. However after having a conversation with him, he couldn't do it. Part of it was because he was afraid of Baek Pyo since he knew that Baek Pyo was the head guard of the previous Mengju. He didn't know how Baek Pyo would react if he told him.

-Who do you see me as? That you help me secretly behind my back?

Would he start beating him? If it ended like that it wouldn't be that bad.

-Are you my enemy? Do you plan on taking my family? I must get away from here after eliminating you.

What if he wanted to kill them? Although he mastered the Seven Stances of the North Sea, he couldn't do anything against a master like him.

Kwang Du drank his alcohol deep in thought.

As they said, you could never judge a book by its cover. Although he looked calm and normal, he is a master that most people would not be able to take on.

'No, the person who used to be the head guard of the mengju wouldn't be like that. I should tell him. He could react like this.'

-I have been waiting for a new master after leaving the Alliance. Thank you for telling me.

'Should I? Should I not?'

Kwang Du was filled with conflicting thoughts.

Then he spoke, "Is there something in your mind?"

When Kwang Du looked up it was Baek Pyo with the food.

"I am sorry for surprising you."

“No, I was just thinking about something.”

With a smile, Baek Pyo laid down the food in front of him.

As he was about to turn away Kwang Du said, “If you have time can I have a word with you?”

“Of course.”

Baek Pyo sat across Kwang Du. Seeing Kwang Du come here alone and seeing him deep in thought, Baek Pyo knew he had something to say.

Then Kwang Du filled a cup and gave him it, “Here have a drink.”

“I usually don’t drink when I am working, but I guess I’ll have this one.”

The two of them cheered.

Kwang Du started the conversation, “The thing that I am about to tell you is related to my master.”

He finally made his decision to tell him everything.

“Did something happen to young master Byuk?”

“Yes, something happened.”

“What is it?”

“Because of you.”

“Because of me?”

Baek Pyo was surprised.

Kwang Du told him everything that Byuk Lee Dan told him. How Sa Ma Chun ordered his subordinate Jo Byuk to prey on his family. And how Byuk Lee Dan prevented it.

Kwang Du believed that the most important part of it was that he needed to tell Baek Pyo that Byuk Lee Dan saved him and his family.

Although Baek Pyo was surprised at hearing such a thing since he was the former head guard of the mengju, Baek Pyo acted calm after hearing it.

“Why did he help me in secret?”

Baek Pyo was not longer Baek Pyo the owner, but he had turned into Baek Pyo the head guard of mengju.

“Since he is someone like that. He isn’t the type to boast about doing something honorable.”

“Then why did you tell me?”

“Because my master likes you very much.”

Baek Pyo was surprised even more.

“He likes me?”

“Yes, He wants to achieve his goal with you. Since he doesn’t know how to express his feeling, I am telling this to you in his stead. He knows that you will indebted to him if he told you, so he will never tell this to you. So you would never know what happened. I am telling you like this so that you can follow my master.”

After telling him everything Kwang Du closed his eyes. His heart was racing, and he was afraid that Baek Pyo would act against him.

“If he knows that I told you this I would be disciplined by him.”

Then someone came into saying, “Ah, so you already know.”

Kwang Du was turned his head to the door with a surprised look on his face, “Young Master.”

“I was wondering where you went all day. It seems like you were causing an incident here.”

I entered the tavern but didn't ask Kwang Du what he talked about.

I said to Baek Pyo, “You disregard everything that he said. And I am sorry for not telling you about Sa Ma Chun.”

“How did you learn about it?”

I wanted to tell him that I was Chun Ha Jin, and I was here to protect him, but I couldn't.

“As you can see I am trying to make the Kang Ho a better place. Then suddenly I learned that young girls were being kidnapped. After investigating it, it brought me to this place. Then I learned that Jo Byuk was kidnapping the girls. I then found out that he was after you and your family. Since I had already eliminated them I believed that I didn't need to tell you.”

Baek Pyo didn't say anything. Since what I just said to him was pretty hard to take in.

“You don't need to dwell on it too much. It's already over.”

“Thank you for looking after me but... my relation with Kang Ho is... over. I am sorry.”

“There no need to be sorry. You don’t have to worry about it.”

Then Kwang Du said with his head lowered, “I messed up everything right?”

“Not”

Kwang Du said with a sigh, “I think I did.”

Kwang Du looked at me with watery eyes, “I am sorry young master. However, I believe... you shouldn’t hide your true feelings. If you go about without saying anything then Mister Baek would never know your feelings young master. But I knew that the final decision was up to Mister Baek. I am sorry young master.”

I approached Kwang Du and patted him on the shoulder, “I know your feelings.”

Since Kwang Du revealed everything, I felt much better. Kwang Du probably already knew that I would never tell him and just leave. Since he knew me the best.

But I wanted what was best for Baek Pyo.

Then Kwang Du said with a surprise, “Ah?”

Both Baek Pyo and I looked at where Kwang Du was looking.

It started snowing.

Kwang Du forgot about the previous conversation and said with a light tone, "It's snow."

This was the first snow of the year.

"Don't they say watching the first snowfall would bring forth a good year?"

Hearing what I said, Baek Pyo was surprised. This was what Baek Pyo said to me before I died.

"Let us go Kwang Du-ya."

"Yes."

Kwang Du got up from his seat.

I said my final words to Baek Pyo, "This may be our last meeting. If fate allows us I am sure we will meet again."

But Baek Pyo was still stunned.

I didn't know what to say to him. I am sure that he wasn't ready yet. My last words were my last present for him. 'Always be

cheerful after watching the first snowfall.'

Right as I was about to leave.

Wuuuuu!

Something started vibrating.

Everyone including me was surprised.

The thing that was shaking was the decoration on the wall.

I was the most surprised out them all since I didn't send any energy to it, but it was giving off some sort of reaction.

Wuuuu!

Divine Sword of King Shura was crying.

Although I used him for a long time. This was the first time that he cried.

Wuuuuu!

The vibration became stronger and the decoration shattered.

Bang!

The wooden decoration surrounding the sword exploded and it showed its true self.

Everyone was looking at it with a surprise. But I knew that it was calling for me.

Jiiinnng!

It was calling for me.

Chapter 68: When The First Snow Falls Again (4)

Baek Pyo was surprised to see the sword that he had disguised himself to have shown itself before us. Since I was that surprised, how could Baek Pyo not be even more surprised!

But the person that expressed it the most was Kwang Du.

“Woahhh!”

This was the first time Kwang Du experienced something such as a sword crying on its own.

I quickly told Baek Pyo, “We’ll be going then.”

I was dragging Kwang Du out the door in consideration of Baek Pyo, but then the sword started crying again.

Jiinnng!

It sounded as if it didn’t want me to leave. So I stopped, then its crying receded. It was reacting to my motion. When I turned around Baek Pyo was looking at me with surprise. He had also realised that the sword was reacting to me.

I slowly approached the sword. Jiiinnngg! The sword’s sound grew deeper. Then I took a step back and the sword’s cry became louder.

It was definitely calling for me.

Baek Pyo looked at me with a questioning mean, “Why is something like this happening?”

I looked at Baek Pyo and asked him with my stare, ‘Can I go close to that sword?’

After looking between the Divine Sword of King Shura and me, he nodded. He was certain that the sword was calling for me. I slowly approached the sword and its crying sound receded, as if a wild animal was calming down.

It stopped crying after I touched it. And I took down the sword that was on the wall. Seeing this blade after about a year, my heart also moved.

Shiiing!

When I unshed the sword it felt refreshing and it started crying again.

Jiiinnnnng!

This time it wasn’t crying, but expressing its emotions. It was saying something like ‘It’s been a while, Master!’

Yes, it has been a long time.

We were exchanging our feelings. The bond that we had developed after fifty-something years. Then I put it back in its sheath. Everything became normal again and great silence divided the room. No one said a word.

Then Baek Pyo asked me, “Who are you?”

At this moment I was certain that fate was calling for Baek Pyo. On the first day that he opened his shop, I visited. I sat at my favorite place and ordered my favorite food and drink from my previous life. Then I rescued his family from disaster, and I told him the exact words he had said to me. Finally, the Divine Sword of King Shura recognized me.

I quietly told him, “I am the heir of the Byuk Clan, Byuk Lee Dan.”

Baek Pyo looked at me flabbergasted. The sword that had never cried, had cried for the first time in front of me. This was the work of fate, calling for him to accept it.

“Someone who wasn’t worthy is now the mengju. Because of this, there will be great chaos in Kang Ho.”

Baek Pyo opened his eyes. He was the person who knew it best - that the current mengju was not worthy of that title.

“I wish to put an end to it... Will you help me achieve this?”

The next morning, Kwang Du was cleaning the table at the inn. He was cleaning it to the degree that it was starting to glow.

Then someone asked, “Is the customer even supposed to clean the inn?”

Turning around, he saw Kong Soo Chan smiling at the door.

“So someone with a cheap lip finally decided to show himself.”

“I am sorry, master Byuk was looking for you. I didn’t want to say it but I got a feeling that I had to say it.”

“Haha, you did well telling him.”

Since Byuk Lee Dan had come in person, things were going the way he planned.

But there were some sights that he could not forget.

“Then why are you cleaning?”

“This is what I usually do when I get bored. It clears up my mind, making things clean.”

“I understand you. For me, it’s calculus.”

“Calculus? About what?”

“Just anything that comes to mind. How much we made last year, how much we need to start this guild...”

“Why do you do something like that? And you believe my cleaning is the same as your calculus?”

“I think I am the normal one.”

“Oh, my goodness...”

Kong Soo Chan started laughing and Kwang Du followed. These two had gotten much closer since they had moved to Mu Han. To get close to someone, one had to live with them.

“So what was the result of your accident?”

Kwang Du was looking out the window when Kong Soo Chan asked him this. The world seemed more innocent with the snow covering it.

“The result... I think we will have to wait and see.”

Baek Pyo was watching Myung He play in the snow.

Jung Young approached behind him, looking at the two swords that were lying beside the door. One was her husband's sword, and the other a sword that she had never seen before. That sword was the Divine Sword of King Shura.

Her eyes clouded. Ever since her husband had started his business, he had never taken out his sword.

“Did you watch as the first snow fell?”

He nodded to her.

“That's a relief.”

Although she was hesitant, she trusted her husband. This was probably how all women who were the wives of Kang Ho members felt.

“Someone asked me to come back to Kang Ho with him.”

“Who?”

“Someone from far away. He is the heir to a Clan in San Dong. I

don't know what kind of person he is.”

“He must be a great person.”

Baek Pyo turned around with a look full of questions.

“If not, you wouldn't be hesitating like this.”

That was true. When he had first seen Byuk Lee Dan, there was something about him that had made Baek Pyo feel connected to him. But that was not the reason why he was hesitant. Even though the person was great, he was not planning to take on anyone else as his master besides Chunhajin.

But then, the Divine Sword of King Shura shook his belief. Baek Pyo knew that a divine sword like King Shura would choose its master. And he was certain that it chose Byuk Lee Dan as its master.

Being accepted by the Chunhajin's personal sword put Baek Pyo in a very uncomfortable position. He knew that his fate lay with Byuk Lee Dan. The man kept reminding him of Chunhajin ever since they had first met. And he had also saved their family, he was indebted to him.

“He knows that Kang Ho is in chaos. He said he wants to protect the Kang Ho. To tell you the truth... I don't know what to do.”

“You should go.”

“Honey.”

“Did you know that you haven’t had a single nightmare today?”

That was true. He hadn’t had a nightmare.

Jung Young knew that the place where her husband belonged was not a store like this, but the Kang Ho. She knew that it was time to set him free again.

“If the reason why you are hesitant is because of Myung He and me, just go. I will protect Myung He. If it’s because of the previous mengju, you should still go. You should protect what the previous mengju created.”

“Honey...”

“If what he said is true, you should protect the Kang Ho. Just the way you did all those years ago.”

She was now looking at Myung He.

“You should protect it for Myung He. So that he can live in a peaceful world.”

Squeak! Crunch!

Stepping on the fresh snow, Baek Pyo was coming towards me. We were facing each other in a forest behind his shop. He had his sword on his waist, and the Divine Sword of King Shura on his back. From this, I could tell that he had made his decision.

“I believed that you were a great person the very moment I saw you. But right now, I don’t know.”

“I understand.”

“You said you wanted me to be your subordinate?”

“Yes, I did.”

Baek Pyo took out his sword.

“What is the meaning of this?”

“I don’t just serve anyone.”

His eyes were glowing with passion. It was the same sight that I remembered whenever we went to the battlefield together.

“You could die because of me. Do you still want to take me?”

Baek Pyo was telling the truth.

Then I stepped forward and said, “I don’t just take anyone for my subordinate either.”

There was no need for any further talk.

Baek Pyo also took a step forward, and now we were slowly circling each other. I knew Baek Pyo’s sword art better than anyone else. There was one common strength and weakness in his sword art. It was not a sword art to kill, but one to protect. It was weak because it was a sword meant to protect, but it was also strong, for the very same reason.

“I am coming, be careful.”

This was the first moment in my life when I was facing a master level expert.

After his warning, he slashed his sword at me.

Swoosh!

He was aiming for my arm. His attack was fast, and did not hold any wasted movements. I turned my body as easily dodged. He kept assailing me, aiming for my vitals. But I dodged and blocked his sword. He had probably started off easy because he did not

think that I could be stronger than him. But after couple of exchanges, he started going all out.

I was facing him using my White Crane Art. Although I had the Ashura Soul Chasing Sword art, I couldn't show it to him. There might be a day when I would have to show it to him, but he probably wouldn't believe me if I said I learned it personally from the mengju. So I had to say I learned it from his master, or apprentice brother.

Slash Slash Slash Slash!

He started to get serious and to exert more pressure on me. Since I was fighting him bare handed, I used my hands and feet to deflect his attack. It may have looked like a life or death situation for most, but I for one felt at peace. Since the opponent was a master, it allowed me to vastly improve my techniques.

But I believed that it was time to end it, so I dodged his sword and penetrated his defenses.

Bang!

Baek Pyo was sent flying.

Crash!

Lying on the ground, Baek Pyo covered his eyes. He did not know what had happened in that last moment. But one thing was

certain. If I wanted to, I could have taken his life.

I offered him my hand. He took it and raised himself. Baek Pyo looked at me, confused. He had not expected me to win. I could have lost to him on purpose, but in Kang Ho it was important to show my power to someone who was going to be my subordinate. The relationship between a subordinate and a master was especially important, and the subordinates liked to follow a strong master.

That was the reason why I had shown him my strength. To fully turn him into my subordinate.

Before his final decision, Baek Pyo asked me, “If there comes a day when you must fight them, will you fight them?”

He was referring to Ma Bong Gi and the person who was pulling the strings.

“Yes, I will fight them.”

“You may have to fight against the entire Kang Ho.”

“I already know.”

“Everyone might die.”

“Everyone might.”

“Then why are you going to fight them?”

“Because he is an evil person. And an evil person cannot rule the Kang Ho.”

There was a great silence between us.

Then Baek Pyo went on his knees and said, “I, Baek Pyo, the former head of the Fierce Guard Sect, the master of Guardian Wind Sword Art, vow to the heavens to faithfully serve my master Byuk Lee Dan”.

With that, he took out the Divine Sword of King Shura and offered it to me.

“This was the personal weapon of the previous mengju. This is the most important sword in the world. Since it chose you, I am offering it to you, master.”

“Can I really take it?”

“Someone else entrusted this to me. At first I didn’t want to, but since it chose you, I’m sure that person will understand.”

I received King Shura and put it on my waist. Then it started crying again.

Jiiinng!

Hearing its cry, Baek Pyo nodded. He was now certain that he had found the rightful owner. I grabbed Baek Pyo's hand, and he looked at me with eyes full of passion. How much had he suffered because of me? This was the type of person that he was - a truly loyal person. And now fate had allowed us to meet again.

“Until death do us part.”

Baek Pyo's eyes widened. He understood what I was feeling.

“I will serve you faithfully until death.”

I was thankful to the heavens for allowing us have a relationship like this once again.

On the day after the first snowfall... I had gained someone more reliable than a thousand subordinates.

Chapter 69: At The Tip Of Destiny's Branch

(1)

I sat across Baek Pyo in front of his store before the opening time. We sat across each other not as customer and owner, but as master and subordinate. Whenever I made a new subordinate, I treated them with the respect based on their age. This was true with Jung Yeo and Kong Soo Chan. But with Baek Pyo, I wanted to treat him as I always had. So, I told him beforehand that I will lower my speech and so he should do the same. And Baek Pyo freely agreed.

“What will you do with your shop?”

I was able to freely ask him question.

“The previous mengju would occasionally come to this place. He rather liked this place's atmosphere. Since I've followed him many times, I got used to this place. And once mengju-nim died, I didn't want to stay in the Alliance. I felt guilty of not being able to protect him. I feel like it was my fault.”

Baek Pyo lowered his head.

I was sincerely moved since he thought of me that much.

But Baek Pyo continued, “I am sorry. I should stop talking about the previous mengju-nim.”

He was worried that my feeling would be hurt since he was talking about his previous master. Hey the person you are talking about is me.

“Its alright. Isn’t our enemy the current mengju? Its weird to not talk about the previous mengju-nim. You could talk about him as much as you want. Wasn’t he the person you liked and respected the most?”

“Thank you for saying that.”

“Since we are on the topic of mengju, I think there is someone backing Ma Bong Gi. He isn’t someone who could have risen that to the place by himself.

Baek Pyo wasn’t surprised.

“There is a huge possibility.”

Since he was the head guard, he was the closest to the mengju. He heard everything that the mengju heard, he saw everything that the mengju saw. So he knew almost everything about the Kang Ho.

Why wouldn’t he be curious as to how Ma Bong Gi became the Mengju? It was just that he didn’t look further into it since he was faithful to his duty.

“If there exist a bigger enemy, there is someone that we must have on our side.”

“Who is that?”

“His name is Kal Sa Ryang, and he was the formal chancellor who used to serve under the previous mengju.”

I pretended that I didn’t know, but I was expecting this answer.

He told me various things about Kal Sa Ryang and I pretended to be ignorant.

“Before I leave this place, I must meet advisor Kal”

I knew that he was going to tell him about me and King Shura.

If Baek Pyo left without telling him Kal Sa Ryang would be worried since, Baek Pyo had King Shura.

“But I don’t know if I could meet him that easily. He is always being observed by Sa Ma Chun.”

“We should tell him when it is time. There is no need for us to move this early, since we as well as advisor Kal might be in danger.”

“You are very wise.”

Since Sa Ma Chun believed that I destroyed King Shura he couldn't use it to pester Kal Sa Ryung.

“You must never forget. To achieve our goal we need his wisdom.”

But making Kal Sa Ryung into my subordinate is something that would much harder than gaining Baek Pyo.

I was only able to gain Baek Pyo because Kwang Du and the cries of King Shura. This was only possible because of the heaven's will. So to gain Kal Sa Ryung I must also gain the heaven's will.

It would be easier if Baek Pyo could persuade him. But it would still require tremendous luck.

But for now I was going to let him be. I knew Kal Sa Ryung the best. He must have a reason for staying at the Alliance. So I will let him do as he wished.

If fate brought Baek Pyo to me I as sure it will do the same for Kal Sa Ryung. So I will wait until then.

This time I told him about the Byuk Clan. About my father, my mother, Sword Sect as well as the Lesser Sword Sect, and about Jung Yeo of the Yang Clan.

“My first goal is to take over San Dong completely.”

To be honest, since the number one clan the Yang Clan was under my control and we had a family relation with the number two clan the Song Clan. More than half the San Dong was under my control.

“Considering these situation, you could say that the Byuk Clan has already taken over more than half of the City. This is where I want you to help me.”

Baek Pyo’s eyes lightened after hearing my story.

“Although you were acting as a guard until now, I want you to fight in the front line now.”

“Understood.”

The good thing was the Baek Pyo didn’t have too many acquaintance since he was a guard. So no one would suspect anything if he left. And no one would recognize him if he went to San Dong. Even if he did most would think of him as an retired expert who wants to spend the rest of his life in the countryside.

“What are you currently doing right now?”

“I am currently making a merchant guild.”

“What is it that I must do?”

“Before we get into that there is something I want to talk to you about.”

“What is it?”

“To wrap up everything in Mu Han it would take another month or two before we can go back to San Dong. So I was wondering if your family could move into our house during that time?”

Baek Pyo was surprised to hear something he never expected.

This was a very difficult topic to talk about. How can he live apart from his wife and son in someone else’s house.

“Not just this time. if you want, you can say with us forever? Living as a single family.”

I need to build a safety net for him family, so that he could move around freely.

“Since my parents are watching over them there is nothing for you to worry about.”

“I would be thankful of that but, I am afraid we would be a burden to you.”

The thing that made Baek Pyo hesitant was his family and mine.

“Hey, what do you mean being a burden? Your family is my family and vice versa.”

Baek Pyo’s eyes widened. I understood his feeling since I was being truthful with him.

“Will you do it?”

“Yes, then I will do it. Thank you master.”

“Hehehe. Good. Good choice.”

I was truly happy since I was most concerned about the safety of Baek Pyo’s family more than Baek Pyo.

“Maintain the shop for now. You should close it as we are about to go back to San Dong.”

“Yes, I understand.”

There are some business that I still had to take care of at Mu Han. Especially regarding Kal Sa Ryang. So until then it was wise to keep the store opened.

“In few days I plan on going back home. I will take your family then, so spend time with your family.”

“Understood.”

We clashed our glasses together and cheered.

Although I don't like drinking too much for some reason this alcohol tasted very sweet. This made me wonder if this was the reason why people drank.

“Warrior Baek”

I softly called him.

“Yes.”

“No need to fight for the peace of Kang Ho. Just fight for your family. Since that is what I am doing.”

Sometime fighting for your family gave you strength. And Baek Pyo understood what I meant.

“I will remember it master.”

We drank with each other for a long time.

This was the first time that I got this drunk after coming into this life.

Two days later.

This time Baek Pyo and Kwang Du sat across each other.

Baek Pyo had called Kwang Du.

“Thank you for coming the other day. Without you I would have never found my new master.”

“I should be the one that is thankful.”

Kwang Du laughed. Until today he was very nervous about the outcome. He was afraid that he messed up everything for his young master.”

He thought that to do something for someone else’s happiness you must empty yourself first.

Now that he think about it he believed he made the right decision. And since the outcome was good he became happy.

“Lets have a drink.”

“Yes, please.”

To be honest, Kwang Du really like Baek Pyo. He didn't know how to describe it but he felt more safe and secure with him around just like a big brother.

If he didn't like Baek Pyo then he wouldn't have come the other day.

“Please take care of me.” Kwang Du raised his glass.

“No I should be the one saying that.” Baek Pyo clashed his glass.

The next day, I took Jung Young and Myung He and headed to San Dong.

Since it this trip had a women and a seven year old child I rented a very comfortable carriage. And we stopped everytime Myung He felt tired and when it was nightfall we always stopped at an inn.

And at the inn we got the best room and ate the best food.

Although Jung Young was uncomfortable getting treated like this she was very moved.

She wouldn't know but the person who declared their marriage some nine years ago was me.

And like this I was getting closer to the two of them.

One night she said, “My husband used to have nightmare everynight. But after meeting you his nightmare disappeared. Thank you young master Byuk.”

This might be another reason why she was thankful for me.

“That’s a good thing.”

“Please take good care of my husband.”

“That is something I should be saying. Please take care of us.”

After twenty or so days we finally arrived home.

“Mother, father. I am back.”

My parents welcomed us warmly. Before I left I told them about Jung Young and Myung He. So, they welcomed them warmly.

“Welcome, Lady Jung.”

“Welcome.”

Jung Young greeted the two of them, “I am called Jung Young. Please take care of me. Myung-Ah pay your respect to the elder.”

Myung He bowed to my parents, “My name is Myung He. Please take good care of me.”

Although he was only seven years old he spoke very clearly.

My mother squatted next to Myung He and said, “So you are Myung He. Who do you look after that makes you so handsome.”

He turned his head around and said cutly, “My mother.”

My mother smiled, “Seeing him so bright, you don’t have to worry about his future.”

“Hahaha.”

Hearing my mother’s joke everyone laughed.

“Lets get along well in the future.”

My mother gave him a hug. She showed her motherly emotion.

My father said to Jung Young, “Think of this as your house.”

“Thank you.”

My father asked me, “How is it going in Mu Han?”

“Things are going well. Everything is going as I planned and I met a great warrior named Baek Pyo. I am sure he will be a great help to us in the future.”

“Good.” My father said with a smile.

“Before you make a decision, you must always think about the person on the receiving end of the action.”

“I will keep it in mind father.”

My mother grabbed Jung Young’s hand. “Being a wife of a Kang Ho-in there are only men in the house. All they talk about is their fights. So, I was getting bored, but it seems like I finally have someone to chat with. Let’s get along well in the future.”

Hearing what my mother said, Jung Young became flustered. She never expected them to treat them like this and she didn’t know how to act in front of them.

In actuality they were the parent of the person who her husband decided to follow. This was a very complicated relationship. But they were treating her well as well as trying to make her as comfortable as possible.

“Now lets look at the room that will be yours.”

It was a room that wasn't far from my parent's bedroom. It was one of the biggest room in the house.

The interior was clean and well decorated.

“This will be your room from now on.”

Feeling exited Myung He jump up to the small bed that designated for him.

“Wah! I have my own bed.”

This room had everything that Myung He and Jung Young needed all thanks to my mother.

Jung Young became even more flustered, “We don't need such a big room like this.”

She thought that she was going to live in a small room doing household chores.

“Do you not like it?”

“No. That's not it but...”

“What should we do, this is the worst room. If you want a better one...”

“No, no we will use this room.”

She couldn't refuse my parents since they came out like that. Of course she will understand after living here for a while that this is the second best room.

When I sent a message home, I requested it to my mother. Since it is someone special take extra care. But this exceeded my expectation.

She looked at me with a prideful expression, ‘what do you thing? What do you think about your mother?’

When Jung Young wasn't looking I stuck out my thumb saying, ‘mother, you are the best!’

Unfortunately the stronger you get the more burden your family has to bear and the more likely they will become the target.

But I know. For a truly strong person their family will become their strength.

Today, since my family increased, my strength also increased.

Chapter 70: At The Tip Of Destiny's Branch (2)

The next morning, I assembled the Lesser Sword Sect.

Although it hadn't been too long since I last saw them, I could feel the change.

"Have you been well?"

"Yes!" All the members of the Lesser Sword Sect said in unison.

"Martial Artist don't say thing with their words but with their action."

They created a space at the center of the practice ground and started coming out in groups of five to display their skills. Just by seeing their basic movements I could see their growth.

The lesser sword sect was truly improving, and the helm of it was Kwan He.

His physical capacity had improved, his basics were much more solid and he was now even able to successfully hit three targets from thirty paces away.

"As I promised I'll teach you the more advanced throwing techniques."

“Thank you”

He made an elated expression. Other members of the sect made a jealous face as I taught Kwan He the advance techniques which infused one's ki into it.

If you don't have a solid base and try to learn an advanced technique, there was bound to be an accident, so I couldn't teach it to others yet.

In front of everyone Kwan He demonstrated what he learned from me.

Swoosh!

The speed and the power of the throwing knife increased drastically.

The other members of the sect who were watching cheered.

I told Kwan He in front of everyone, “It isn't always beneficial to infuse your ki into your throwing art.”

“Why is that?”

“The reason why someone who mastered the sword art would use a throwing technique is if he is under pressure. If your heart is in a

rush then your ki flows will be in conflict with one another and you can get hurt.”

“I understand”

“But with enough practice, you can control your ki freely.”

Kwan He made a big smile. I already knew that he was going to practice what he was lacking.

“Do you remember what I said before?”

“You said I should go slowly. Although it is good to give it my all. I shouldn’t force myself too much.”

“Yes, never forget what I said.”

Through Kwan He I gave the rest of the members motivation to do better. Since I would reward those who try their best.

I think this was very important for a sect, giving others motivation through the example of a few.

“Next spring, I plan on expanding our lesser sword sect.”

Hearing that there will be new members, everyone was in a better mood. I planned on creating two more division with twenty

members each, with a total addition of forty members.

“Make sure you train hard so you aren’t an embarrassment to your hubae.”

“Yes! Understood.”

I gave tips and pointers on every single one of them. Although it was a brief moment in time, it was a great benefit to them.

‘Hey punks, get stronger!’

The meeting was dragging on, and nowadays Song Hwa Rin was attending these meetings as well.

Today the Song Clan was in a meeting with the Eastern Sword Clan.

It had been two months since she started learning this sort of business from her father, and every day was like this. There were days where she had to sit in a meeting all day, while other days she had to use her martial arts to take someone down.

When she started she thought it wasn’t going to be that hard, but maintaining a clan wasn’t an easy thing to do.

Just today, she had to engage in a mental bout with the other party as the meeting dragged on. She was getting impatient with them but she couldn't show her emotions.

In situations like this she thought about how amazing her father was. If it was her, she would have just got up and left. However, her father was patient with them as they dragged out this meeting. Sometimes he would appease them, other times he would pressure them.

Since she was the only daughter she would one day have to do this work by herself.

'Can I really do it? Can I go through various meetings like my father and not lose my temper?'

About an hour later the meeting came to a close. Fortunately, the Song Clan didn't get the short end of the stick.

As they came out Song Wu Kyung smiled, "It must have been tiring?"

"All I did was sit. You must be the one tired father. Good work today."

"Haha. I am always happy that you are here."

She could feel it. Teaching her these things wasn't his only purpose. He was lonely these days. He wanted someone with him,

to share his burden.

‘Are you getting that old father?’

Thinking about it made her saddened.

When she returned to her room, Soo Ran-ee was there to tell her something.

“Master Byuk has been waiting for you for a while.”

When she left to meet me, I was waiting for her in the garden.

“When did you arrive?”

“Just a while ago. Have you been well?”

“I’m doing well. When will you go back to Ho Buk?”

“A few days from now.”

“You are busy.”

She felt bitter hearing that he was going to leave soon. She was surprised that she was feeling bitter because he was going to leave. She stared at me for a bit. She wouldn’t stare at any other guys like she would at me.

“You always feel different every time I see you.”

“How?”

“I don’t know how to describe it but ...”

Although she couldn’t say it she could feel it. That I was getting stronger, my body looked more firm, my eyes had a more profound look, and my skills had improved vastly.

She was being drawn to me. When she heard that I was here, she was happy and her heart beat faster when she saw me.

However, she couldn’t reveal her true feelings. Since she was the one who brought up the word ‘divorce’ she couldn’t show me the change in her heart.

So, she had to change the subject, “You have two swords?”

Her sight was now on my swords. I had two swords on my waist.

One was the Heavenly Origin Sword while the other was the Divine Sword of King Shura.

I didn’t plan on disguising King Shura since it wasn’t a sword that attracted too much attention and it was made to look like an ordinary sword. However, just in case I changed the grip on the

handle. Since many people would put a cloth on their handle it wasn't obvious.

At first, I wanted to hide it in the White Crane Peak, but I decided not to. Since he called out for me, I will always have him on my side. As I was getting better at the White Crane Art there weren't very many occasions where I had to use him. However, if I was in a dangerous spot I would use him.

Because I don't need two swords I planned on entrusting it with someone.

I spoke as I hit King Shura, "I found a decent sword, should we go for a walk?"

"Sure."

We walked through the garden together. Although the winter air was cold, it felt even more refreshing than before.

The first time that I met her was in winter, and now it was the winter again.

There had been many changes during this year. I had changed, and she changed as well.

"Thank you for taking care of my mother when I wasn't here."

“What do you mean? It’s my obligation.”

“So how is that technique from last time?”

She was in the process of improving her stance. “I am working hard to improve it. I tried this and that, but it's harder than I thought. I will show it to you when I find the right answer. Will you check it for me then?”

“Of Course.”

I thought she was amazing, thinking of a way to improve things by herself. Through that process, she will have improved a lot.

“Should we go for a drink?”

It was a slip of tongue, “Ah I’m sorry. You don’t drink, right?”

“Let’s go. I could just get drunk off the atmosphere. I’ll pay.”

The restaurant that we entered was called ‘Phoenix’

This restaurant was located somewhere in between Kok Bu and Fort Chu. Since it had a good atmosphere she led me here.

Although it was a little far, after coming here I didn't regret it.

If it was a regular restaurant there would be screams within the kitchen and the serving hall, and people would be drunk talking about the Kang Ho. Everywhere you go it was like this.

However, this place was different. This place was clean, brightly decorated and there were professional musicians playing. There was even a stage to dance on. It was as if we entered a banquet hall.

Seeing me look around she told me, "Why are you like that? It makes you look like this is your first time here."

"This is my first time being here."

"I know that you occasionally came here to drunk with the girls."

There was no way that this rascal Byuk Lee Dan wouldn't have come here before.

Because the atmosphere was good, most of the customers here were a couple.

Following one the waiter we took our seat and order some food, alcohol, and tea for her.

"When did you come here before?"

“When I first came back. I heard that you usually visited this place... so I was curious.”

That was an answer that I never expected.

A few minutes later the food and the drinks came. It was twice as much as another place. Although the taste was about the same the difference was the atmosphere.

Hearing the music while drinking and eating made the mood even better.

“I am learning how to manage the clan these days.”

Thinking about it, I remember the time when I was in a carriage with Ma Jung Soo. That time she was also on her way back from conducting business for the Song Clan.

“It is harder than I thought.”

I nodded in agreement, “Same for me.”

“But you are doing well. You left your mark through your lesser sword sect. I want to do something like that but it's been hard even before I started.”

She sipped on her tea as she would have done for alcohol.

She was only twenty-one years of age.

Of course, it was difficult. That's why they say this is the springtime of youth.

"As you get used to it, you are bound to get better."

"Will I?"

"Yes you will."

We raised our glasses and cheered.

"For the future."

Some people went up to the dance stage and the tempo of the music changed. We were looking at them as they danced.

"I feel jealous when I see others dance. How can they be so good at dancing?"

I jokingly said, "I have a feeling you are good at dancing as well."

She shook her head and said, "I am a brick."

"Haha"

Talking about dancing I remembered an expert from the Demon Sect, The Empress of Pleasure.

Her personal technique was the Reaper's Dance. She would kill those who were so engrossed in her dance. But her dance was truly otherworldly.

She was dancing the Reaper's Dance until her last moment when I finally killed her.

Song Hwa Rin was clapping, "Wow, that was amazing."

I clapped with her, "They are really good."

Watching them dance I realized something. Although I watched many dances during banquets in the past, this was the first time that I saw someone dancing this close to me. During a banquet I was always busy meeting people and greeting them. So I didn't have the opportunity to enjoy the dancer. I just considered them as background noise, thinking that there were dancers for any banquets.

That's why I believed until I came with her here today.

Since I lived at the peak of Kang Ho for seventy odd years, I thought I knew everything about Kang Ho. However there were still things that I did not know about, things that I have never done.

It was just like the time when Number Seven enlightened me. Although it casually came out of her mouth, it was something that I never thought about as the Mengju.

To achieve the state of the Spirit Sword I spent every day meditating, reading all sort of manuals and practicing techniques. Trying to discover something that would help me get that much closer. However, I was unable to achieve it.

However, now, I got a feeling.

To achieve something big you can't look to find enlightenment from something big. You will find your enlightenment from something small like a conversation, a dance or even watching an ant.

I am someone who decided to live my life differently. So I must think differently, have a different job, and meet different people.

I needed to look at the world in a new way so that I could see things that I had never seen before. I was certain that at the end of this I would be able to obtain the state of the Spirit Sword.

I was able to obtain enlightenment from this place.

What? Now that I think about it.

This was the second time that I achieved enlightenment like this. Not from meditation but from real world experience, and with women at that.

Could it be that to achieve the Spirit Sword State would I have to meet a bunch of women?

Chapter 71: At The Tip Of Destiny's Branch

(3)

I wasn't someone who was ignorant in the relations between a man and a woman. Although I wasn't like Ma Bong Gi who flirted with different girls, I still had many female acquaintances.

When I was the Strongest Under the Heaven, many women chased after me. As I said previously, I even dated the Number One Beauty Under the Heaven. This happened after I ended my previous date's clan when she tried using me for political power.

I also dated the Number One Beauty of the Central Plain, Number One Beauty of so and so. I truly met a lot of beauties, so much so that I do not know what love, fun, hate, manipulation, or just a personal relationship is anymore.

After breaking up with one beauty I wanted to meet a more beautiful woman, more and more...

If I wasn't the mengju, I probably would have been ensnared by them even though I knew that nothing would last forever. I would be trapped in in this cycle trying to get out.

“What are you thinking about?”

I woke up from my thoughts. I couldn't say my previous women, could I?

“I just remembered a good dancer.”

“Who?”

“It's nothing. Let's have another cup.”

I raised my cup of alcohol while she raised her cup of tea and we cheered again.

The restaurant regained its calm after the dancers left the stage.

Staring at her empty glass I asked, “Do you want a glass?”

“No.” She shook her head.

We continued our conversation about various things. From the different things about the San Dong City to our parents.

“Your mother is a wonderful person.”

She must be thinking like this since her mother passed away when she was young.

“It's because you've never been disciplined by her.”

“Really? It can't be that bad, She really is a good person.”

“Hoho. You might learn it later then. Her true self underneath.”

When I raised my fist, she started laughing.

This alcohol tasted better than ever with her company. After finishing the bottle we continued our conversation.

I didn't know what she thought of me, but I rather liked this sort of relationship with her.

“This was fun.”

She smiled at my words, “I enjoyed it too.”

She looked more beautiful when she smiled.

When we left the restaurant we saw a couple of men riding horseback.

Since they were all wearing the same sort of outfit it must mean that they were from the same organization. The person who was at the helm of it had a fierce atmosphere around him.

The horses that passed us came to a stop, and the man who was at the helm got off his horse and came this way.

I could see the worrisome expression that Song Hwa Rin had.

The man said to Song Hwa Rin with a surprised expression, “Junior-Apprentice sister.”

Junior-Apprentice sister?

“Senior-Apprentice Brother.”

From their exchange, I could tell that they had a junior-senior relationship.

“What happened? You went back home without saying anything.”

“Well, something came up.”

She introduced me to him. “He is my senior-apprentice brother from the Ho Yeon School, Ho Yeon Tak. This is ...”

I didn’t give her the opportunity to finish, “My name is Byuk Lee Dan and I am Song Hwa Rin’s fiancé.”

“Ah, so you are the fiancé from birth.”

“Yes.”

“Nice meeting you. We must take our leave now. I am Rin-ee’s Senior Apprentice brother Ho Yeon Tak.”

Although he appeared to have a bright and light personality, it must just have been a show since I couldn’t see any emotion coming out of Song Hwa Rin as she looked at him.

“Then, please take good care of our Junior-Apprentice Sister.”

“I should be the one saying that.”

Song Hwa Rin asked Ho Yeon Tak, “Why did you come here senior-apprentice brother?”

“There are some things we need to take care of at San Dong so I came down here with our master.”

Song Hwa Rin’s expression darkened after hearing the word ‘master’.

“Did master come down as well?”

“Of course. We came together. I am sure he will be pleased to see you. Please come by soon. We are currently living at Fort Chu. Since I am busy I need to get going. Make sure to come by.”

“Yes”

Ho Yeon Tak said his farewell, “Until next time.”

“Until next time.”

Ho Yeon Tak and his convoy left the area.

I could sense her mood had hit rock bottom.

“Should we get going as well?”

She turned around and grabbed my arm, “We should have a drink, for real this time.”

We arrived at a tavern not far from the ‘Phoenix’.

This time she drank for real. It was as if she was unleashing all of her desire for alcohol in one go. She really looked like wanted to kill the whole bottle in a single try. She kept gulping down the bottle.

I just watched her action from the sideline.

After stopping she told me a story that was hidden deep within her heart.

It was about her master.

“I started learning my martial arts from my master when I was fifteen. My father was really happy since I was able to get an expert from the Ho Yeon school as my master.”

Ho Yeon school was one of the Four Great powers of Kang Ho that was a level below that of the Five Great Clans.

“At first everything was great. My master treated me well, but as I got older his gaze changed. I brushed those thoughts aside since he treated me like his daughter. One night after I turned twenty, when I opened my eyes from my sleep, my master was looking down at me in my room. He reeked of alcohol, and I didn’t understand his stare. He said he wanted to hug me but he was hesitating. He seemed to be deciding whether he was going to attack me or not. Then I slapped him in the face. Since he was drunk he probably doesn’t remember. But I left and quickly returned home.”

Tears started forming in her eyes.

I finally understood why she hated alcohol.

When she returned home she saw Byuk Lee Dan acting a fool because of alcohol. I truly wanted to apologize to her in his stead.

I finally understood why she wanted to prove her worth through her strength and not her beauty. It was because men would do

anything because of her beauty.

“I couldn’t say anything to my father. I just told him I came back since my training had ended. However I kept having nightmares after that day. I still remember it as if it was yesterday. I want to believe that it is a thing of the past but it keeps coming back to haunt me.”

It was because she was betrayed by the person she trusted the most. Tears finally fell from her eyes.

It pained me to see her as well as Baek Pyo having nightmares about the past.

After wiping her tears with her sleeves, she emptied another glass.

“Did he ever contact you again?”

She shook her head, “No. There was nothing. I thought our relationship was over...”

“You are still having nightmares. Then it's not over yet.”

“No everything is over. Ahh... I don’t know.”

She emptied another glass and I filled it for her.

I drank with her but I didn't say anything to comfort her. I couldn't think of anything to say to her.

All I could think of was how I felt sorry for her.

Yes, if this helps ease your pain just a bit, I will drink with you.

Drink and be angry. Scream if you want to. Curse if you have to.

Whether it starts big or small, if something is locked away in your heart it will only grow bigger until it becomes as big as Mt. Tai.

So you need to let it out before it grows that big.

I carried her all the way back home.

She was mumbling something as I carried her on my back, "... don't hate me too much. I am trying."

"I don't hate you."

"Really?"

"Really."

Bite

She bit my shoulder.

“Ahha!”

“Liar! I know you don’t like me.”

This girl...

I tried to say something but she was fast asleep.

I could only smile at the situation. I didn’t dislike her actions. She told me something difficult. One of her deepest secrets. She was giving her trust to me.

This was my first time, being bitten by a woman that is.

It was at the break of dawn when we arrived at her house.

I was expecting there to be more chaos in the Song Clan but it was rather calm.

Soo Ran gave me an eye but seeing that Song Hwa Rin was safe, she didn’t say anything.

“I didn’t worry too much since she was with you.” Song Wu Kyung as he watched Soo Ran-ee take her away.

How could he not be worried? His only daughter went out with a grown man and didn’t come back home until at dawn.

But seeing her come home safe he could relax a bit.

“I am sorry. We were enjoying ourselves too much and didn’t see the time go by.”

“Why did she drink until she became drunk? Have you...?”

“We didn’t do anything bad. We just had fun drinking.”

“Then it's fine. You must be tired. Go back home and rest. Thank you for bringing her back safe.”

“No, I will make sure this never happens again.”

I didn’t want him to worry nor did I want to betray her trust. Since I knew what the root of the problem was I should take care of it.

But first I needed to know if I needed to kill him or teach him a lesson.

“I will come back at midday.”

“Please come then.”

I could tell from his words that he truly wanted us to be together.

As she was being carried away by Soo Ran, Song Hwa Rin said, “Hey! Byuk Lee Dan!”

Everyone was surprised at her yell.

“Who is she? The person that you said was a good dancer?”

Everyone’s eyes widened and I made my escape from the premise.

Oh my god! She still remembered that. It seems that she is still a woman.

The next day I went to investigate about the masters of Ho Yeon.

Song Hwa Rin’s master’s name was Ho Yeon Nam. He was the third brother of the Ho Yeon school’s grandmaster and was a pretty famous person in Kang Ho. This was the easy part.

Now I needed to know what he was here for, but I was able to learn it from father.

“There is a disturbance in the Murim-in of San Dong.”

“What is it father?”

“Do you remember the person from the Heavenly Dao Gate. Ma Jung Soo?”

“Of course.”

“I thought he just left, but in actuality it seems that he died.”

I showed a surprised expression.

“What? Who did it?”

“There are rumors going around saying that it was the work of the Dark Guild of San Dong.”

“So that’s how it is.”

This was a rumor that I spread.

“To investigate the matter. Heavenly Dao Gate sent someone named Yeom Hwa.”

Ultimate Blade Yeom Hwa.

He was someone that I knew. He had the title Decimator within the ranks of Heavenly Dao Gate. He only made an appearance when the Heavenly Dao Gate needed to eliminate someone or something.

Since he wasn't an assassin, he was someone that Heavenly Dao Gate used to show their strength and force. This was how he got his name Decimator.

The reason why they sent him here was to take revenge and show their strength.

“How did the Dark Guild respond?”

The Dark Guild had many mysteries shrouding them as they were spread throughout the Central Plain.

“They also sent someone because they didn't want to be the victim of it.”

Could it be?

“I heard that to pacify the situation an expert from the Ho Yeon School came.”

Now I knew why Ho Yeon Nam and his disciples had arrived at San Dong.

It was to help the Dark Guild of San Dong.

Since both sides made their move, this would turn out to be a very ugly battle.

I didn't need to say anything about the Heavenly Dao Gate and the Dark Guild, but now the Ho Yeon school was starting to get on my nerves. Part of it was because of Song Hwa Ring, and part of it was because they were helping out the Dark Guild.

Now, since the things have come this way, I must observe their movements very carefully. I must understand every move that they make.

Since I had my plans for them.

Chapter 72: At The Tip Of Destiny's Branch

(4)

It was around noon when Song Hwa Rin awoke from her sleep.

Her head was screaming in agony.

She barely managed to get up after washing her face with the cold water that Soo Ran had brought to her.

“Ah... how much did I drink.”

As soon as she finished speaking, she heard a voice from the door, “You drank until you dropped.”

She turned around to see Byuk Lee Dan standing near the door.

“Are you alright?”

“No... my head feels like it's going to split. I don't remember anything from yesterday.”

“You don't remember biting me either?”

“What?” She said, surprised. “I bit you? Me? You?”

I simply nodded my head.

“Why would I do such a thing?” She was so surprised that she didn’t know what to say. ‘How could I bite someone? I’ve never done that before....’

“Should I tell you everything that happened?” I said jokingly to her.

She shook her head and replied, “No, please forget everything that happened.”

After saying that, she smiled. Although she had a splitting headache, and even though her feelings were all mixed up, she felt better than ever; she’d told me everything that she’d had pent up—the things that she couldn’t tell anyone else. Although she somewhat regretted it, she felt much better.

I asked her carefully, “Are you going to meet your master?”

“No. I don’t want to.”

“I think that you should meet him.”

“What?”

“If you don’t, you’ll never be able to escape that nightmare.”

She looked me in the eyes.

I proceeded to ask her, “Do you think that he’s someone amazing?”

“No, my master is... a terrible person.”

Even though he might not have done it in the end, he was still a terrible person for thinking of raping his apprentice.

There isn’t always a pretty flower at the tip of destiny’s branch. Sometimes there are rotten fruits and ugly flowers.

I said to her calmly, “For something like this, it’s better to solve it when you get the opportunity, rather than delay it.”

“Alright... but, can we do something before that?”

“What?”

“Let me get over this hangover. My stomach’s killing me.”

“Hahaha!” I burst out laughing.

Song Hwa Ring began laughing with me. She looked the most beautiful when she was laughing.

Ho Yeon Nam was in his room cleaning his sword when his disciple, Ho Yeon Tak, returned.

He was a man that was in his late fifties, had greying hair, and a stubborn look. The way he looked at his sword gave him a dark aura.

“Teacher, I’ve returned.”

“How was it?” He asked without taking his eyes off of his sword.

“The Decimator, Yeom Hwa, is currently staying in an inn with one of the five subordinates he brought. The subordinates in question are known as the Five Divine Swords of the Heavenly Dao Gate; their skills are well-known.”

Ho Yeon Tak had a worried expression on his face. There were fifteen of them that had followed their master to San Dong. Although they might have the advantage in numbers, many of his brothers were lacking real battle experience. On the other hand, Yeom Hwa and the Five Divine Swords of the Heavenly Dao Gates were experts who had years of experience under their belt.

Even if his master were to take on the Decimator, he still wouldn’t have the confidence to take on the Five Divine Swords.

“I think we need to ask for some assistance from the Dark Guild.”

Ho Yeon Nam stopped cleaning his sword and asked him, “Are you afraid?”

Ho Yeon Tak quickly replied, “No master. I’m just suggesting it in case they call for help from more experts.”

“They won’t; the Decimator isn’t the type of person to ask for other people’s help. He knows that he’s the best person for this sort of work.”

“I’m sorry master, I didn’t think this matter through.”

“...Do you know why I chose to accept this assignment?”

“Why, master?”

“Because someone like Ma Bong Gi doesn’t deserve to become the Mengju. How dare the Heavenly Dao Gate believe that they can do whatever they want in Kang Ho. I’ll never forgive them!”

Ho Yeon Tak knew how much his master venerated the previous mengju; Chunhajin had been akin to a god to him.

But then Chunhajin had died, and Ma Bong Gi had become the mengju. This had caused his master’s hate for the Heavenly Dao Gate to rise to another level.

When the Dark Guild had requested help, everyone else but Ho Yeon Nam had declined.

“I will kill Yeom Hwa with my own hands.”

Yeon Ho Tak was surprised at his master’s last sentence. They mustn’t kill them. The only reason that they were here was to deter the Heavenly Dao Gate’s aggression. They’d received an order from the school master Ho Yeon Sae to try to appease Yeom Hwa with money.

But to eliminate Yeom Hwa? This was something that should never happen.

His master was someone who took great pride in his martial arts. But for him to be blinded by his pride and not know the limits of his power made him worried.

The reason he venerated Chunhagin so much wasn’t because he liked him, but because he’d had the title ‘strongest under heaven’.

This was the title that his master had strived for his entire life, yet hadn’t even managed to get close to. He venerated the person who possessed such a title—one which was reserved for only a single person in all of the Kang Ho.

But when Chun Ha Jin had died, his master had become both fiercer and colder. Even though he hadn’t been the nicest person, he still became even darker than before.

“Master, your disciple has a concern. I know that you’re fully capable of killing Yeom Hwa by yourself, but what would happen if you did so? He is from the Heavenly Dao Gate.”

Although they were from one of the four great powers of the Kang Ho, there was no way that they could contend against the mengju.

Killing Yeom Hwa would only create a bigger problem.

“It’s not something that you need to worry about.”

There wasn’t anything he could say since his master had answered like this.

“I’ll excuse myself for now.”

As he was about to leave, he suddenly said, “By fortune, I met Hwa Rin-ee.”

Ho Yeon Nam stopped cleaning his sword once again. “Is she doing well?”

“Yes. She was with her fiancée, Byuk Lee Dan.”

Ho Yeon Nam continued to clean his sword as if nothing had happened.

Feeling the dense atmosphere in the room, Ho Yeon Tak left the room.

I was currently eating hot soup with Song Hwa Rin.

Although we could've eaten at her house, we'd decided to go out to a restaurant.

After emptying her bowl, she made an expression like she'd regained her happiness.

"I finally feel alive."

I felt relieved as well. "That's good."

When I was still the Mengju, I'd always circulate my energy whenever I drank to ensure that I remained sober. However recently, I've liked getting drunk with Kwang Du, Baek Pyo, and Song Hwa Rin.

"So you carried me back home?"

"Yeah."

Her cheek started to turn red.

“Wasn’t it hard? Didn’t you drink just as much as I did?”

“I was looking out for both of us, so I didn’t get too drunk.”

“Why?”

“Because you were getting drunk out of your mind. One of us had to stay somewhat sane.”

She gave me a light smile. “Thanks for yesterday.”

She lowered her head so that I couldn’t see her eyes. However, it seemed like she was crying.

“After my mom died... this is the first time that I’ve cried.”

“...You feel better right?”

She gave nodded slightly.

“You asked me why I hate the mengju, right?”

“You said you hated him because the person you hate loves the mengju...could it be?”

“Yes. My master loves the mengju.”

“So that’s how it was....”

You old wretch. I felt disgusted when I heard that that old wretch actually liked me.

I felt once again that fate was playing a trick on us; how Byuk Lee Dan’s life was intertwined with my previous one.

She then asked me with a scared and worrisome expression, “What should I do when I meet my master?”

“You should ask for an apology. A proper apology.”

“Will that help?”

I nodded. “It will.”

A single word can make a mountain of difference.

“Will he really apologize?”

“We’ll know after we meet him.”

The reason that she needed this apology was to cure her of her nightmares.

But I will also investigate this on my own; I'll find out whether or not he should be punished by me. If he had any ill intent towards her, I'll kill him after she receives his apology. If he didn't, then he'll eventually rot away with the passage of time.

"I'll find a good time for us to go and meet him. Will that be alright?"

She nodded.

"Then there's something that we have to do before that."

"What?"

"Follow me."

We left the restaurant and went around to the back of the mountain. After making sure that no one else was around, I took out my sword.

"What do you want?"

"Let's spar."

“What?” She looked at me with a surprised expression. “Do you want to beat me up again?”

“Hahaha....”

“This is no joking matter!”

“Sorry. Really, I’m sorry for that day.”

She finally revealed her playfulness. The barrier between us finally crumbled, and I was finally able to see her true self.

“Why do want to spar with me?”

“So that you can fully master that technique.”

She finally understood my intention.

“Wait!”

“You have to beat him with the skills that he taught you.”

“That’s impossible!”

“No, it’s possible!”

“How?”

“Did you forget? The weakness in that martial art. You can use it against him.”

“Ah!”

Seeing that her master wasn't going to give her a sincere apology, this was the best option that I'd thought of for her.

To get out of it completely, she needed to overcome him. In other words, she needed to beat him up personally. That was the only way that she could escape from her master.

“The words that I'm about to say may hurt, but you need to listen to them.”

She nervously nodded.

“After you finish beating him up, forget the martial art that he taught you.”

“What?”

She was surprised to hear me say something so ridiculous.

“How can it be a good martial art if there are flaws?”

“But...!”

“You’re going to say that ‘you’ve learned it for five years’, and ask ‘how am I going to forget it?’, right? Just forget it! The Song Clan probably paid a large sum of money for you to learn that martial art.”

This was one way to earn money for a decent school. Usually famed master from different schools would rear many disciples. Later they could call upon their disciples to earn some money.

“That martial art isn’t Ho Yeon Sae’s personal technique, right?”

She nodded.

“That martial art is worthless. Where did they get such a worthless martial art to teach you? If you want to remain in the backwaters of San Dong, you can keep learning it.”

But of course, this was my standard. If my father or Song Wu Kyung saw it, they’d believe that it was a decent martial art, since it wasn’t all that bad.

However, since I’m getting involved in this, I wanted her to start fresh.

Song Hwa Rin’s face darkened. She didn’t want to forget her

memories of the past. After a minute, she finally opened her mouth. “Whenever I think about my master, I get sad and angry. Yes, I want to forget it. But if I do forget it... the last five years will have been for nothing.”

“If you can’t forget it, then this will go on for the next five years, then ten... for your entire life.”

The truth hurt, like a sword piercing her heart.

“Fine. Let’s say I forget it. Then what?”

“Are you certain? Will you really forget it?”

“Yes, I will.”

She had finally started trusting me. Thus, I need to return her trust.

“If you truly forget it, think about it as if you’re starting fresh—learning something new. I’ll teach you something better than that worthless piece of shit.”

There are few martial arts that I know of that can be very beneficial for women, and are definitely better than the one that she’s practicing right now.

Of course, she still hadn’t made her decision yet. This was

obviously because she didn't believe that my martial art would be better than the one her master had taught her.

“Rin-ah.”

“Yeah.”

There was no need to drag this on. I simply said two words.

“Trust me.”

After a few moments, she nodded her head. “Alright, I'll trust you.”

Chapter 73: Don't Look Back (1)

“Danjoo-nim, we have returned.”

Two men entered the Wind Tavern. They were former subordinates of Baek Pyo when he was still the Head Guard for the Mengju. The one with a bigger physique was Yang Chung and the one who looked younger was Myung Do. They were Baek Pyo's most loyal subordinates.

They were the ones who tried to stop Baek Pyo from leaving, saying that they would quit with him.

He jokingly disciplined them, “I am no longer the Danjoo, what if Yim Danjoo found out?”

Yim Joon Tae, who was the former vice-leader of the Fierce Guard Sect, had now become the new leader of the Fierce Guard Sect after Baek Pyo retired.

Then Yang Chung jokingly said, “But Yim Danjoo-nim always talks about you. How he misses you, and how he will quit his job.”

Myung Do nodded his head in agreement.

Baek Pyo smiled, “That man...”

Back when Baek Pyo was still the Leader of the Fierce Guard Sect

he was a leader that was respected by all of his subordinates and he had a pretty good relationship with his vice-leader Yim Joon Tae.

It wasn't just for Baek Pyo but everyone else as well. They all respected one another and had a good relationship with one another since they knew how hard this work was.

While most other guarding jobs consisted of patrolling and guarding the door, being the personal guard for the mengju was different as well as difficult. They always had to be on their guard since the life of the mengju was in their hands.

Baek Pyo laughed and said, "Tell him that although that place may be hard work, out here is hell. That it is a blessing in a disguise and he should work hard."

"We'll tell him sooner or later. Or you can tell him yourself."

"Tell him he can visit any day."

Besides the first time he visited Baek Pyo on his opening day, Yim Joon Tae didn't have the time to visit Baek Pyo anymore. However Baek Pyo wasn't saddened by it since he knew best what sort of position it was. He was thankful that Yim Joon Tae visited him on the first day.

The two people brought their own alcohol and Baek Pyo brought them food from the kitchen.

Then they said with a serious face, “Danjoo-nim, we have something to discuss you about.”

He sat in front of them with open ears, “What is it?”

They said it in a serious tone, “We want to quit.”

“Why?”

“Just because... it's hard.”

He knew that this wasn't the whole truth since it was hard the moment they joined this sect.

“And there is no sense of purpose...”

This was the real reason.

The only reason that someone would become a guard, is because of the pride it brings protecting that person. Because of this, they would risk their lives protecting the person. However, Ma Bong Gi wasn't someone that they believed to be worthy, so there was nothing in it for them.

They were taught to remove their emotion from their work, but how could they? They didn't like Ma Bong Gi, and now the Heavenly Dao Gate was causing problems in various places across the Central Plain.

So they thought to themselves, ‘Why must we protect someone like this?’

Plagued by these thoughts, they made up their minds. And now they wanted to discuss it with Baek Pyo.

“Do you have any plans after you leave?” Baek Pyo questioned them.

Yang Chung said it jokingly, “Can’t we wash dishes here?”

Myung Do added, “I’ll cook in the kitchen.”

The three of them were laughing.

Then he looked at them with a serious expression, “Do you really want to work here?”

The two of them exchanged glances. They knew that Baek Pyo’s real work wasn’t in the kitchen but somewhere else. How can three men work in such a small shop? No, aside from being small would he really ask them to do this sort shop work?

They didn’t ask what sort of work it was. And answered without hesitation, “Just instruct us.”

It seems that they were still loyal.

Baek Pyo said, “This will be your last meal as a customer so... drink and eat all you want.”

There are days when I think that no matter what sort of martial artist you are, you are a martial artist. This was how I think when I evaluate women as well. If people ask me when women are most beautiful, then I would say at moments like this.

Shiinnng!

Song Hwa Rin swung her sword at my heart.

Of course, I am not saying that they are most beautiful when they are aiming for my life. What I am trying to say is, I think they look the most beautiful when they are full of sweat practicing their martial arts.

If that was my taste, then Song Hwa Rin right now might be the most ideal type of women.

Slender legs and waist. Plump breast. The ideal body and face. On top of that, she was even drenched in sweat now due to practice. Nothing could compare to how she looked right now.

I dodged her blade and yelled, “One more time!”

“Again!”

“Again!”

“Again!”

We were practicing her techniques again and again.

“If you get into a real situation you will get nervous. Nervousness can lead to mistakes. The only way to prevent this is by practice.”

You must practice until your body memorizes it. A human’s mind is a very fickle thing, no one knows how it will react to certain things. They could fall into a trap that someone laid out, or they could have a mental breakdown

However, it is alright if the body remembers what to do.

Even if your mind doesn’t know what to do, if your body remembers, then you can live.

This was how I was instructed her.

Although I wasn’t going to be there, since this was her fight I was going to leave her to it.

Once she finally memorized one thing, I instructed something else.

“If you attack him, most likely your master will dodge your attacks.”

“He will dodge them?”

“So you must end this using combination attacks.”

I didn't know whether she knew how devastating these attacks were but I knew that the man who taught her these would do his best to avoid getting hit.

“All you have to do is prepare for two things.”

I don't know if he knows how devastating these attacks are or if he does not. But I knew how he would react to both cases.

I trained her through the night.

Around midnight she collapsed, panting on the ground at the place she was standing. This was probably the first time that she practiced this hard.

I sat next to her.

“Good work today.”

She said while looking up into the stars, “Something about this training feels different.”

“It's because you were stuck in a mold.”

“What? Mold?”

She raised her body. Although she looked tired she looked brighter than ever. It was like the more tired you were the clearer your mind becomes.

“The mold that your master created for you. The mold where it made you satisfied by practicing only so much. The mold that made you tired after going over it. What should I say...”

“What?”

“ A limit.”

“Ah!”

“What you are feeling today is because you overcame that limit. Reached a place that you have never gone before. Although everyone believes that they need to overcome their limits, they don't know what that limit is.”

She nodded at my words. Since it sounded right to her. “However, a limit isn’t just external. Sometimes it could be internal.”

“What do you mean?”

“There is a limit internally as well. Your usual habits, thoughts, and actions. Those are limits too. What I mean by breaking through this is to change yourself. Changing your actions, your habits as well as your thought.”

“Ah!”

She was deeply engrossed in her thoughts, and I gave her plenty of time since this was a very important for Kang Ho-In. Something like this could take as short as minutes to hours.

After some time she looked at me and said, “I don’t completely understand it, but get parts of it.”

“That’s good for now. Good work today.”

Although she was full of sweat from today’s work she was smiling.

“You must train like this every day. Since you will meet your master in a few days.”

“Thanks”

“It’s nothing much.”

As I was leaving I said, “Don’t forget. That day it won’t be me or your mind fighting, it will be your body.”

I infiltrated the San Dong Dark Guild’s headquarters.

Since I was on a verge of reaching a hundred twenty years’ worth of energy, there was no one here that could detect me. I knew that my fate with them wasn’t over, who would have thought that it would be like this?

Two people were having a conversation in Ya Chun’s room. It was Ya Chun and his right-hand man Koo Chul. The man who killed Si Gon.

“It wouldn’t be that they are not coming because they got lost. Those bastards of the Four Great

Powers. They dare ignore us?”

When the Dark Guild asked the Ho Yeon School for help, they knew that they would send Ho Yeon Nam. However, he never came to meet them.

“It doesn’t matter, this isn’t my first time dealing with those old fools.”

“But the situation is different now. We are dealing with the Heavenly Dao Gate’s Decimator, Yeom

Hwa.

“Hmmmm.”

“I am worried that they might have a different scheme.”

“Have a different scheme?”

“I am just worried they might betray us and take our money. Didn’t we promise them two hundred thousand nyang for this?”

This was what Ho Yeon Sae requested. He said he would never take this request if it was anything less than that. Not only that they also had to give the Kang Suh Dark Guild fifty thousand nyang in addition as introduction fee. The Ho Yeon school had a close relationship with Kang Suh Dark Guild.

So the total amount of nyang invested was two hundred fifty thousand nyang.

It was pretty hard to calculate how much time they need to

regain that much money, but it was better than losing their lives.

“We should have solved this ourselves.”

“Your tricks won’t work on someone like Yeom Hwa.”

“But if we charge at his together...”

“All of you will probably all die together. Where is the Decimator right now?”

“He is at an inn with the Five Divine Swords of the Heavenly Dao Gate.”

“You are observing him well right?”

“We are watching him twenty-four seven, but I have a question.”

“What?”

“Why is the Decimator staying at an inn? Since we are his target he should be coming to for us

right?”

“It's because he is not here to assassinate me.”

“What?”

“He is here to get revenge on me. He is here to show not just the San Dong but the entire Central Plain. To show the whole world that the Decimator is here to destroy us. They are just setting the stage, and they will strike when the time is right.”

Koo Chul’s expression darkened at Ya Chun’s word, “But we didn’t kill Ma Jung Soo. I will try to appease them.”

“Would they believe you? It's already too late.”

The moment they killed Si Gon things spiraled out of their control.

“I will take responsibility and kill him.”

“Don’t talk nonsense and prepare to depart.”

“Where are you going?”

“To meet Ho Yeon Nam. Since they won’t come to us we must go to them.”

All that he could believe in was Ho Yeon School. He must do his best to escape while the Heavenly Dao Gate took on the Ho Yeon School.

After Ya Chun placed the book in a certain order a small corridor opened.

He placed Koo Chul outside and went inside.

After a while, he came back out carrying something.

“Son of a bitch! You may hate us but you can never hate this.”

The two people left the room.

An hour later a carriage secretly left the Dark Guild's headquarter.

I placed myself right outside watching them leave.

The place that I was at allowed me to listen to their conversation as well as see him going into the secret door.

I was sure there was a safe inside that door. Since only Koo Chul was accompanying him it means no one else knew about it except the two of them.

After staring at the room for a while I placed my sights onto the carriage.

The thing that I had to be concerned with is not the money but their movements. Money must not be my objective, since I could always take it from them.

I threw myself in the direction of the carriage.

When one of the guards looked up I was already gone from that place.

Chapter 74: Don't Look Back (2)

Ya Chun was a very experienced person.

He knew how important first impressions were so he was taking extra care in this first meeting with Ho Yeon Nam. he knew from the first glance that Ho Yeon Nam was a person who liked being complimented.

“Since you are here I am sure that the Decimator is no better than a piece of meat.”

“I don't know without fighting him.”

Ho Yeon Nam hated someone like Ya Chun. Since he is member of a Dark Guild, Ya Chun is no better than trash who rips people off by putting high interest in loans.

But since Ya Chun came to him on his knees praising him, he sympathized him a bit.

“Isn't your opponent the Heavenly Dao Gate? If you succeed then your reputation will only grow in the Central Plains.”

Ho Yeon Nam gave a slight smile. Especially after Ma Bong Gi became the mengju, the Heavenly Dao Gates' morale went through the roof.

In times like this, something this was a chance for him to raise his reputation. This was another reason why he wanted to kill the Decimator.

Ya Chun took out the thing that he prepared beforehand.

“I heard that you brought many disciples with you. We should have a few drinks together.”

It didn't amount to buying one or two drinks since it was around ten thousand nyang.

“Why did you do something unnecessary?”

Although he chastised him, Ho Yeon Nam didn't return it and Ya Chun quickly added something,

“This is just a small gratitude from me.”

Ho Yeon Nam coughed.

Ya Chun quickly changed the topic since he knew how to read the atmosphere.

“I heard that since Ma Bong Gi became the mengju the Heavenly Dao Gate is doing all sorts of evil deeds across the Central Plains.”

Ya Chun used the Heavenly Dao Gate to probe at Ho Yeon Nams mood.

“I heard about it as well.”

“Especially the person that came down here, the Decimator. I heard he was a very vile person.”

Then one of Ho Yeon Nam’s disciple, Ho Yeon Tak, yelled from outside, “It's your disciple Ho Yeon Tak. May I enter?”

“Come in.”

Ho Yeon Tak entered the room. He was the one who brought Ya Chun into this place.

“May I tell him how we are going about this business? Since my master doesn’t know the fine details about it.”

“Yes, of course, he wouldn’t know the minute details.”

Ho Yeon Tak scanned his master’s face to see if he was overstepping boundaries.

This was also to prevent his master from making any promises in killing Yeom Hwa. However his master remained indifferent.

“If my master entered the fray, taking down the Decimator is going to be very easy.”

“That is what I believe as well.”

“But we must be very careful in doing this since behind him is the Heavenly Dao Gate. So we are trying to talk this out. Asking them how much they want.”

“Of course, that is what you must do.”

This was what Ya Chun predicted since he knew that the Heavenly Dao Gate and the Ho Yeon School will not fight for someone like him.

But the next part struck a nerve.

“If that happens we are going to need your assistance.”

“Of course I must give you all the help I can give.”

“They might ask for money. So it is better if you prepared it beforehand.”

Ya Chun was raging on the inside, ‘These thieves want me to spend more of my money?’

The amount of money he had to give the Ho Yeon School was two hundred thousand nyang.

He didn't care if they got into a fight with the Heavenly Dao Gate or had talks with them since he already paid them. But now they wanted him to pay more?

‘Never, I will never allow this to go on like this.’

With a deep sigh he said, “Because of the last incident our financial situation isn't doing so well.”

“Then you must talk with the headmaster, we have no control of this matter.”

Ya Chun bit his lips, ‘These dirty cats.’

This was how powerful organizations worked. ‘Since I am just here to do my mission talk to my superior’, and when they talk to the superior they bring them back to the subordinate. One person sends them to the next, and to the next, back down and up. In the end, this was how they made you give up.

An hour passed by with them talking.

Ya Chun tried to coerce them but nothing was working in front of Ho Yeon Tak. He kept saying they are just following orders and there was nothing they could do. And Ho Yeon Nam was sitting there as if nothing ever happened.

Ya Chun gave up and got up from his seat.

He could just not give the Ho Yeon School the two hundred thousand nyang, but that wasn't the right action since he would be making another enemy besides the Heavenly Dao Gate. They could even form an alliance to kill him.

‘Should I run away with my money?’

Then he would give up everything and live the rest of his life running away.

After Ya Chun left, Ho Yeon Nam got up from his seat.

“Where are you going Master? I will accompany you.”

“You don't need to follow me.”

Ho Yeon Nam disappeared into the darkness.

I tailed Ho Yeon Nam since I heard their conversation.

Since Ho Yeon Nam was a master I couldn't get too close, but since I opened up all of my meridians I could listen in on their conversation from a decent place where he wouldn't sense me.

I was wondering where he was going dead at night, but the place that he arrived at was the Gieseng House.

How can a famed expert like him go to a Gieseng House? I was stunned out of belief.

He called the most beautiful women and started playing with them.

An hour later, I was hidden outside the house.

From within the room I could hear all sorts of things, “Please... master! Master! Some more! More!”

And my heart grew cold.

Four days later, I stood next to Song Hwa Rin in an empty field.

We were able to call Ho Yeon Nam here by having Hwa Rin-ee write a letter to him.

After seeing his true colors, I didn’t want to delay this any longer.

During the last four days, I watched Song Hwa Rin train and when I thought she was good enough I asked her to send the letter.

The reason why I got involved in this was originally because of her. Since this was the best way to fix the scar in her heart.

One person's silhouette was sighted from afar. It was Ho Yeon Nam.

Song Hwa Rin, tensed after seeing him. Although she tried her best to stay calm she couldn't.

Since it was her master that taught her martial arts for five years.

I asked her, "Are You ready?"

"I don't know. But I think I practiced enough."

Ho Yeon Nam was getting closer and she said to herself, "Don't think of him as my master. He is the man that I must fight today. He is my enemy, not my master."

Hearing her say this I gave her a final bit of advice, "You don't have to think like that."

"What?"

"Just accept it. He is your master. He is a master that doesn't care about his disciple's feelings and almost caused an incident after getting drunk. He is a scoundrel but he is your master."

There was a reason I told her this, because the human body is something that will try to do the opposite of what we want to do. By making herself believe that he is not her master, it will only break her flow and not allow her to move naturally. So I believed that it was better just to make her accept it.

After saying “Your master is just an old fox.” I took a step back.

Now it was her fight.

Song Hwa Rin’s field of vision focused back on Ho Yeon Nam.

Although she didn’t look tense on the outside, her feelings were all over the place.

‘How can I fight him like this?’

She looked back at me.

I already knew of her worries so I nodded at her.

Song Hwa Rin accepted my warning and thought to herself, ‘Yes, he is my master. Yes, my master that is a scoundrel.’

Ho Yeon Nam was about ten paces away from her and after taking couple of breaths, she said,

“Master.”

“Have you been well?”

“Yes.”

Ho Yeon Nam's sight was now on me. From his glance, he knew right away that I was her fiancée.

He heard about me, her fiancée, through her.

He believed that Song Hwa Rin was coming here alone but after seeing me his mood turned sour.

Since I didn't show any signs of aggression, he understood that I was leaving everything to Song Hwa Rin.

“Why did you want to meet me?”

“To ask you for a spar?”

Hearing something he never expected Ho Yeon Nam's eyes widened.

“A spar?”

“Yes, Master. I want to spar with you, using the martial art that you taught me. Both you and me.”

Ho Yeon Nam gave a perplexed expression, but Song Hwa Rin didn't tell him the reason.

After a moment he agreed, “Alright, let's spar.”

“Thank you, Master.”

After Ho Yeon Nam took out his weapon, Song Hwa Rin drew her weapon. It looked as if nothing had ever happened between these two and they were giving each other respect.

“Then I will attack.”

Song Hwa Rin started attacking.

Clash! Clang! Clash!

He was using the martial art that he taught her to block it.

When the spar started her head was in chaos. She was so tense that she didn't even know what she was doing.

But she was performing all of her attacks with precision and she finally understood what I was telling her. Why I was telling her

that her body must remember it, because the only thing that she could trust was her body.

She practiced this over and over for the last four days. So even when she used the advanced techniques she didn't feel any different.

It was at this moment!

An opportunity appeared itself before her without her having the chance to realize it. But since she was in the flow, she didn't even realize that she penetrated her master's defenses.

“Ah!”

After screaming Ho Yeon Nam tilted his body to dodged her attack.

This was one of the two cases that I told her about.

“If he knows about the flaw then he is an even worse person since he taught it to you knowing fully well that it is flawed.

Slash

She continued her combination on Ho Yeon Nam and he yelled out.

“Ahh!”

She was able to cut his shoulder and blood started coming out.

After cutting him she withdrew her weapon and took a step back. She realized that she had won.

But of course, if he used his personal martial art she could have never been able to beat him. However, since they were both using the same martial art she knew she surpassed him.

He looked at her and asked, “How could this have happened?”

Song Hwa Rin said calmly, “I am just returning the martial art that you have taught me. In the future I will never use this anymore.”

“What?”

“I will not try to forget what happened that night. I will remember it as how I met a master who couldn’t get over his lust for me.”

Ho Yeon Nam’s face darkened. He wouldn’t be in this bad mood if she cursed at him, but she just turned around after saying her farewell.

I stood there smiling, “Good Job.”

With my words, she made an expression as if she could fly. She was able to overcome this battle against herself and this would only make her stronger.

“Let's go.”

She nodded and walked away with me.

Ho Yeon Nam was screaming from the back, “Uaaaahhhhh!”

He was yelling because he couldn't overcome his anger.

She was tense since she was afraid that he was going to rush at them.

I calmly told her, “Don't look back. He isn't someone who you should look back to. Just look forward and live a good life.”

I kept walking and she followed me smiling.

We left the place together.

And is this the end?

Of course not, up to here was her revenge.

Now it was my turn, and it already started a few moments ago.

Chapter 75: Don't Look Back (3)

Ho Yeon Nam was standing in the middle of a road in a shocked state.

First, he received a major shock from Song Hwa Rin. It was not because he lost to her, but her words,

“I will not try to forget what happened that night. I will remember it as how I met a master who couldn't get over his lust for me.”

This was like an arrow piercing his heart. However, her actions afterward were what really tore apart his heart. He felt as if he was really worthless.

He wanted to run towards them and kill them all. He wanted to kill me and rape Song Hwa Rin on the spot.

‘How much I lusted for her?’

The reason why he let her go was because of his love for her.

Then he received a single mental message. It was a message from me.

-This was from Yeom Hwa-nim. Get out of San Dong right now.

The moment he heard this, Ho Yeon Nam looked dazed, ‘What?’

While he was still stunned, we made our exit.

Moments later his face was full of anger and, “This son of a bitch! I’m going to grind him to Pieces!” He must have thought that everything was orchestrated by Yeom Hwa the decimator.

“Yes. So that’s how it was.”

There was no way the Song Hwa Rin would come to meet him in person and say these things to him. It must be Yeom Hwa the Decimator who is using her.

“So this is your plot to destroy me!”

‘She isn’t a girl who would do something like this.’

Rather than acting calm in this situation, he became even more enraged.

“This son of a bitch! I’m going to personally kill him!”

After this event, I returned home.

I didn't know what the result my last mental message would bring. If he made the correct decision,

then he wouldn't think much of it, but if he was not in the right state of mind then it would bring great harm to him.

Four days ago, after trailing him. I told Jung Yeo to send some spies to trail Yeom Hwa and Ho Yeon Nam. So, I was just waiting for the news now.

On the way to my room, I met my mother and Mrs. Jung. They had a good relationship like a real sister and were exchanging stories.

"Mother, Mrs. Jung." I bowed to them.

Jung Young face was now bright and it seem now that she has gotten used to our house.

"Where is Myung He?"

Jung Young answered with a bright smile. "He is in the middle of his studies. Madam has found a good teacher for him so we sent him to a school."

"I told you don't call me madam, but to call me sister."

"... Yes." Jung Young nodded.

I knew that due to my mother's personality they would become sisters soon. It seems that my mother had taken a liking to Jung Young's calm and bright personality.

I feel really proud of my mother at times like this. Although I asked her to look after them, she was doing it from the bottom of her heart, not because of me but because that's the kind the person she was. I was learning from her that this was how good human relations could be.

This wasn't something that you can learn from experience, since I lived seventy years of my life as a cold and rough person. I was never warm to anyone and never opened my heart to anyone. But now I was learning from her.

"If you need anything please feel free to ask me."

My mother replied in her stead, "I am going to need a daughter-in-law pretty soon."

I left the place as if I never heard them.

I could hear them laugh. How they were gossiping about my marriage.

Four days later I got the news that I wanted.

It was about the meeting between Ho Yeon Nam and Yeom Hwa. I was told that Yeom Hwa declined their meeting a couple of times but finally gave up since the Ho Yeon School were insisting.

But then the meeting that they worked so hard to create was turned into a chaos when Ho Yeon Nam drew his sword and attacked Yeom Hwa.

In the end, Ho Yeon Nam died and Yeom Hwa received a critical injury.

Although Ho Yeon Nam's skills weren't worse than Yeom Hwa's and he had the element of surprise, in the end, he died. It must be due to the fact that his heart and his mind was still confused from that day.

If he truly reflected upon that day, then he would have returned to their school. He wouldn't have lost his life like this, but he couldn't control his anger and lived his life as a fool till the end.

After I finished listening to the news I bought a face alteration mask and went to the San Dong Dark Guild's headquarters.

They must have also received the news since they were having a meeting in preparation for whatever hell might come their way.

When I told them I was from the Heavenly Dao Gate the guard

led me to Ya Chun cautiously.

Ya Chun asked cautiously, “I heard that you were from the Heavenly Dao Gate.”

There were over twenty tense and nervous men inside the pavilion, but I knew that they had hidden weapons hidden within their sleeves and their body.

At this point with my martial arts there weren’t many who could rival me or attempt to assassinate me. If I went in here knowing full well what they were capable of, this wouldn’t even be worth my time.

I pressured them with my killing intent, “You dare scheme against us?”

Because I wasn’t holding back my ki, my ki level was overwhelming the majority of them. Some of the weaker ones were passing out while others were pissing in their pants.

“What do you mean?”

“You dare to use Ho Yeon School to strike against us?”

“I think you are mistaken, sir! We just wanted a peaceful talk.”

“Stop with your bullshit! My Lord has received a major injury

because of that old tortoise, Ho Yeon Nam. Weren't you the ones who called them?"

"We never expected something like that to happen."

"Hmph! And you call that an excuse."

"What is it that you want my lord."

"You must pay with your life. I will kill every last one of you."

A cold atmosphere swept the room.

They were all tense looking at one another. They didn't know how to overcome this tribulation.

All of a sudden Koo Chul moved, "Son of a! Why don't you die bitch!"

Fwing!

He showed his hidden weapon and released it.

Clang!

I easily deflected it with my sword. But the one who fell was Koo Chul.

Fwing! Fwing! Fwing!

They all used their hidden weapon against me.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

But it was futile as I returned them all back to the ones who sent it.

“Uahhhahhh!”

They rest who didn't shoot their weapon all dropped it and ran for their lives.

I drew my sword and slowly approached Ya Chun.

Ya Chun fell on his knees and begged, “Please spare me! Please Spare me!”

When I raised my sword in the air he said, “I'll give you the money that I promised to give the Ho

Yeon School.”

Then I slashed the top of his hair and said, “You should have done that from the start.”

He let out a sigh of relief, “Let us go.”

“I will kill you the moment you try something.”

“I am someone who values my life. Of course I would never!”

Ya Chun took me down the secret room. And that was where the secret vault was.

“You must never move from here. If you make one false move, you could get poisoned.”

When he pressed something to open the Vault.

Clank!

A steel cage fell down. The space between the cage was so small that it was impossible to throw even throwing knives. And I knew it right away that this cage was made out of adamantium steel.

Ya Chun was acting as if he became a person who was safe now, “Haha piece of shit! Where do you think this was coming here by yourself? Do you think I am someone that could be looked down on? Huh?”

While he was cursing at me he opened the safe. There were all sort things in there like gold, paper, money, etc.

He brought out a big bag that he prepared beforehand and said, “So I really have to make a run for it in the end.”

He looked very dissatisfied leaving this place. “If I spend some time hiding, I probably could find some relief.”

While he was halfway into putting the money into the bag he looked at me and said, “Do you know how long I’ve spent acquiring this?”

I calmly said, “You must not even be afraid of hell.”

“Stupid punk! Look at where you are now and say that.”

I drew Divine Sword of King Shura and slashed at the cage.

Clang!

It wouldn’t be cut even with King Shura’s sharp edge.

“Haha you stupid fool. Do you know what this cage is made of? It's made of adamantium.”

Then I gave King Shura my energy and it started vibrating.

Jiinng!

It cried after receiving my energy for the first time in a while.

Seeing the sword cry Ya Chun looked surprised.

Then King Shura became covered with sword energy.

Jiinnng!

I started cutting down the adamantium cage.

“Stupid fool! You can't cut this with a sword! If it cuts that eas...”

Ya Chun's eyes widened, “Huh? What?”

Slash! Slash! Slash!

Part of the cage that I slashed started getting cut.

“What the ...!”

He pressed something on the wall.

Clang!

This time a steel wall enclosed the cage.

Pshhhh!

Poison gas started coming out of the floor.

“Hahaha! You should have just died quietly. Now you will have to face this poison. You know what kind of poison this is? You will feel pain as if your whole body is rotting then you will die.”

The poison filled the wall. And Ya Chun was smiling at the scene.

The next moment his eyes widened.

Shing!

There was a blade that came out the steel wall.

He just believed that this was a desperate attempt but the blade started moving and cutting through the wall and poison started escaping the space in the wall.

I was using the King Shura to cut open the wall.

“Uahh! What?”

Ya Chun couldn't believe what was happening. How could

someone cut the adamantium steel cage when they were breathing in that poison.

“Uahhhh!”

He quickly put more money into the bag, “What are you? Are You a ghost. Or a fucking demon?”

Then he heard it.

Clang!

The steel wall fell down onto the ground.

He looked back with a scared expression and fell down in place.

How could he not be afraid, since I was able to cut the adamantium cage while I was inhaling poison.

He looked at me as if he was looking at a ghost.

“I was just joking around. The poison was just an act. Please forgive me.”

I smiled at him then blew air into his face. I sprayed his face with the poison that I was holding in my mouth.

“I like to joke around as well.”

Without realizing that he breathe in poison he made a painful expression.

“Noo! Ahhhh!”

He started rolling on the ground. But he still didn't understand why I wouldn't die. How could this happen?

After struggling for a moment he stopped moving. And I looked down at the corpse and said, “Just like what you did before, I hope that you do that to King Yama.”

I finished packing all the things that he didn't pack. I put everything in the bag. His whole life's savings. It looks like it would be in the hundreds of thousands of nyang.

People would have suffered because of this money and more would have died because of it.

So I said, “I will use this money to help people. So wherever you are please rest in peace.”

I took not just the money, but everything that was in there be it gold boxes and more.

I even took the adamantium steel cage by cutting it into pieces

that I could carry it. Although it was heavy I was able to carry it with ease.

Then I got to where he kept all the papers that he made the loans with and I lit the pile on fire.

After today, the whole world will know that you have died and these loans will be void. The people who were bound by these loans will be free.

I left the place carrying a big bag.

After today the San Dong Dark Guild is no more.

Chapter 76: Some Things That Can't Be Caught In The Web (1)

It had been a while since I last visited the cave. It was the cave that I usually visited when I had something important to do.

I took out everything that was in the bag one by one.

First, I took out the adamantium steel. There were different qualities of adamantium steel since some of them were infused with different metals. The price of the steel varied depending on how pure the adamantium was. Since adamantium steel was so expensive that even the wealthy wouldn't make a weapon out of it.

There was someone that I remembered from my previous life who used the adamantium, and it was the Black Dragon from the Demon Sect. He tried using it against me in a desperate attempt but I cut it down and in the end, he lost his life.

From the quality of this adamantium steel, I could see that it was a pretty high quality. I decided to give it to an artisan who knows how to handle it so that he could create a sword or two or I could use it for later if needed.

Since this was a precious item which I couldn't use right now, I hid it near the cave.

Next, I took the banknotes and precious jewels out of the bag.

There were five hundred thousand nyang worth of banknotes. This was Ya Chun's life savings that he cheated off all those people, and the precious jewels that he had were worth probably a hundred thousand nyang.

There were two things that I was going to do with this money. First was to create an information sect. Considering who my enemy was, it was imperative that I had a good information sect. The second thing that I was going to do was have Baek Pyo create a secret sect of formal experts

and masters who listen to my every command. I was going to allow Baek Pyo to take full control of this. Everything from choosing the members to running it. I knew that Baek Pyo was more than capable of doing something like this.

The final thing that I took out was papers and notes. As I was burning them something caught my eye.

It was a book full of codes and numbers. I knew that this was Ya Chun's secret notebook. I wanted to burn it I didn't. something told me that I should look at it before burning it. So I put it back in the bag.

With that everything I brought from San Dong Dark Guild was organized.

As I came out of the cave I looked down the mountain. My enemies were growing stronger, and I didn't hate this. This was another reason for me to get stronger.

The next day news spread very fast.

That the Ho Yeon School's Ho Yeon Nam had died and the Heavenly Dao Gate's Yeom Hwa was critically injured.

Since one side was the Ho Yeon School while the other was the Heavenly Dao Gate this was a major event. It was spreading like a wildfire, and the news that Ya Chun died at an expert of the Heavenly Dao Gate followed soon after.

Everyone was talking about this event, whether it be at an inn, restaurant, or tavern.

The Murim-in of San Dong were especially tense since they were afraid something might happen.

And it was the same for my parents.

“I wonder what type of repercussion this typhoon will bring.”

“That I what I think as well.”

Both my parents were discussing the future.

“I believe we don’t have to worry too much about it.”

“Why do you say that?” My father asked calmly.

“The Ho Yeon School is located at Kang Suh while the Heavenly Dao Gate is at Kwee Zhu. Both of those places are far from here. Since things have already reached a conclusion would they really come all the way to San Dong again?”

My father nodded, agreeing that it was a valid point.

“Then what do you think about the San Dong Dark Guild? Would they try to get revenge and turn the San Dong into Chaos?”

“I believe that they are finished. The Dark Guild themselves are beings of evil. They don’t have the power to do anything right now. If they wanted to take revenge they would just watch from the sidelines as we take each other down.”

Both my parents nodded their head. Their stares at me were full of pride. Besides what was going to happen, since their son became like this, what more could they want?

I was feeling very good. Since I was able to eliminate the ones who needed to be eliminated and I earned a huge sum of money. However the best thing was I was able to keep Song Hwa Rin out of harm’s way.

This was the result that I wanted. Having them fight each other.

When you meet a very strong enemy on the battlefield the most important rule was to divide and conquer. This was the method that I used to use often back then.

If the Heavenly Dao Gate made more and more enemies, then the Heavenly Dao Gate's influence and power would be divided and weakened.

As I raise my strength I would find out who is behind Ma Bong Gi.

It wasn't the time for me to grab their attention just yet. I still needed to raise our strength.

It seemed like there would be peace in San Dong for a while.

"I will go back to Mu Han tomorrow."

"Already? You should stay here longer." My mother said regretfully.

But my father held back his regret and said, "Yes, you should to these things while you are still young."

And he gave me an advice like always, "Remember to treat your subordinates fairly and respectfully."

“I will remember father.”

Although this was something that I always heard, something came to my mind. ‘Maybe to become a great leader, that was all you needed?’

You might think that being in the highest place, you might need to do many things, but after thinking about it maybe everything could be made easy if you did that?

When Song Hwa Rin opened her eyes, the morning sun was brighter than ever. When was the last time she felt like this?

After stretching she got out of the bed, “Ah, I slept so well today.”

Moments later Soo Ran came in with a cup of water, “Milady, you look better than ever.”

“I slept really well today.”

It was the first time in awhile that she had such a deep sleep and she didn’t have any nightmares today.

Soo Ran was happy to see this. She was feeling terrible watching her lady have nightmares every night.

Song Hwa Rin looked out the window. Although it was the same scenery from yesterday, it looked different since she was in a different mood.

The moment she heard the news about the death of her master, she was sad. The moment she felt sorry for her master she realized that she had escaped from her master. Her scar had healed a bit.

If she was delighted at the news of the death of her master then it would have meant that she still had a scar. However, since she felt sad and sorry for her master she was able to move on.

Then a maid came in and relayed a message.

“Master Byuk has arrived.”

“What? Tell him to wait a bit.”

She quickly left the room.

“Where are you going Miss?”

“I need to clean myself! Then I must put on makeup. Go find some decent cloth. You know? The one that I like. Hurry! GO!”

Seeing her lady act this way for Byuk Lee Dan, Soo Ran made a smiling expression. This was a side that she had never seen from

her lady.

Soo Ran looked out the window and was able to see Byuk Lee Dan in the garden.

After meeting Byuk Lee Dan, Song Hwa Rin was changing. She was getting brighter and more lively.

Although she hated Byuk Lee Dan at first, now she was thankful for him.

“But you can’t make my miss cry master Byuk.”

An hour later, Song Hwa Rin came to the garden yawning.

“Why are you here so early in the morning?”

She was stretching as if she just got out of bed.

“Did I come too early?”

“No. I was just waking up. I didn’t clean up yet.”

“I’m sorry.”

“No. I’m sorry for making you see me like this.”

However she still looked beautiful, and her clothes suited her really well.

“Why did you come so early?”

“I’m going back to Mu Han. It might be two or so month since I return, so I am just here to tell you.”

“Oh, so that’s how it was.”

Although she acted like she didn’t care she was pretty sad on the inside.

The relationship between her and I was changing daily. This was what she was thinking since she didn’t know my thoughts. She was wondering what sort of change our next meeting would bring. Her heart was fluttering.

She said to me, “Thank for what happened, really.”

This was the truth, since she was going to have to bear the pain for the rest of her life I didn’t help her.

“Have a safe trip.”

“Before I go, I must fulfill my promise.”

“Promise?”

“Didn’t I tell you that I was going to teach you a better martial art?”

“Were you serious?”

“What, you thought I was joking?”

Seeing her nod I asked her with a surprised face, “Then why did you make the decision to forget your previous martial art?”

“Didn’t you say ‘trust me’?”

There was a moment of silence.

“Hahaha.” I started laughing. She really trusted me without a second thought. “Shall we go outside?”

I took her to a practice ground that was empty and we faced each other.

The martial art technique that I was going to teach her was the Clear Thunder Sword Art. It was a pretty famous martial art for women.

This sword art is incomparable to the sword art that she learned from Ho Yeon Nam.

First, I taught her the basics, after showing it to her a few times I taught her the more advanced parts.

I just taught her the key points so she was able to learn it quickly and accurately. This was how we spent the rest of the day. I was doing my best teaching her while she was doing her best to learn.

By the time it got dark, I finished teaching her everything.

I told her with a smile, “If you fully master this, then you won’t be beaten.”

Although I said it jokingly, she knew how profound this sword art was. She was very excited to learn something so profound.

“I’ll check on you the next time so just practice what I taught you.”

She didn’t ask me how I knew this martial art.

“I’ll do my best!”

I added, “The person who is using the martial art must be wise. You must never grow complacent and try to be free. Never forget that the people who can use their martial art freely have practiced

hundred if not thousands of times. Practice is the only way you can be free.”

This didn't only apply to martial arts.

This was how freedom was.

With bright eyes she nodded her head. She probably knew what I meant by this since she was very smart.

“Then I'll be going.”

“Then next time you see me I'll have gotten much stronger.”

“I'll be expecting it.”

As I was about to take off she did something that I never expected.

She took out her hand for a handshake.

Her hands were trembling since this was her first time shaking hands with a man.

I grabbed her hand firmly but not too tightly.

This was her first handshake with me.

I returned to Mu Han immediately.

On my way there I visited the cave and took the adamantium steel with me since there was no artisan who knew how to handle it in San Dong.

I hid the adamantium steel inside the cave White Crane's Peak. This place is safer than any vault in Kang Ho.

Then I went to the place where Kwang Du and Kong Soo Chan was living.

"Younnnngg Massster!" From afar Kwang Du ran towards me and hugged me. I didn't try to avoid him since I truly missed him as well.

"I missed you, Young Master!"

"Hey punk! When others see you, they might think that this is a reunion of separated families."

"Then let them think like that. We heard stories about what happened in San Dong, so I was worried."

Haha. He was someone who couldn't sleep at night because he

was worried for me.

“And?”

Seeing my mischievous smile Kwang Du said, “Oh my god.”

Kwang Du could sense that all this was related to me.

“Don’t worry. Things were solved rather well.”

“Young Master?”

“What?”

“Weren’t you afraid? I might be afraid to even get near them.”

“Of course I was scared, but don’t I have someone who will die for me?”

Kwang Du took a step backward. “But must not forget that your sword fodder is still very weak. It might take another hundred years for it to grow stronger!”

“Hahaha.”

Kong Soo Chan who was in the back walked towards me and greeted, “Did you have a safe trip, Sir?”

“All thanks to you.”

“You look better.”

I might have looked better but Kong Soo Chan did not. He looked tired after working so hard.

“You should take rest as you work.”

“I am eating and sleeping as I work.”

“This is an order.”

“Yes! If you insist.” He said with a tense expression, “Master Byuk, there is something that you need to come see.”

It seems he was a bit excited. So, I followed him without a second thought.

Chapter 77: Some Things That Can't Be Caught In The Web (2)

The place the Kong Soo Chan led me was a manor some twenty li from Mu Han. It was a paradise that was beneath a mountain and next to a stream.

“Where is this place?”

“This is a garden that I recently bought. This will be the headquarters of our merchant guild.”

“Oh! So you are finally going to create the merchant guild?”

“Although this is nothing, I wanted to show it to you.”

“What do you mean this is nothing? Won't this be the place that we will write our story? The story of how this garden came to be can be left in the history as legends.”

I showed signs of amazement as I overlooked the manor; it was better than I expected. Kong Soo Chan was someone that went beyond my expectation.

“Have you decided on the name?”

“Shouldn't you name is master Byuk?”

“No, didn’t I tell you before manager Kong? You should take full responsibility for this. So you should name it.”

After a moment Kong Soo Chan said, “Then I will call it the Solar Star Merchant Guild. Although it may be small right now, I am sure in future it will be as big as the sun that lights up the heaven.”

“Good! Let's call it that.”

Thus name of the merchant guild was decided. Since this was the first merchant guild that I created I was very excited.

“Shall we go in?”

I followed Kong Soo Chan into the manor.

It was very simple but very well build. There was a practice ground in the center surrounded by three buildings. The central building was the biggest and the two on the sided were about half the size of the central one. Looking around there was nothing that I disliked about it. Since it was Kong Soo Chan I knew that he was going to be very careful when picking these things.

“Thank you for your hard work.”

“You praise me too much. I just bought a good place with the money that you have given me.”

Kong Soo Chan answered.

“It's not my money but our money.”

“Master.” Kong Soo Chan started laughing. He was truly happy knowing what I said came from my heart.

Then we started to talk about how we were going to operate and expand, but I told him that I was going to leave everything in his capable hands.

With things like this, it was better to let them run things without too much obstruction, so I decided to take a step back. The most important thing that a leader must do is finding someone who is capable and leaving them to their own accord.

Before I left I handed him the book that I found in Ya Chun's secret vault.

“Ah, can you please look through this?”

“What is it?”

“I found it in the San Dong Dark Guild's secret vault. Please look over it when you have to time.”

“Yes. I will do so.” Kong Soo Chan carefully received the book.

Kwang Du came to the manor later that day. After looking around the place, he raised his sleeves and started cleaning the place.

“If you need a janitor you know where to find one.”

He wasn't ashamed of himself being a servant at one time. He was rather proud of it.

“If I wasn't the Byuk Clan's servant how could I have met you, Young Master?”

With him being like this how could I not adore him?

“Hey punk, you should get some more people to help you. You might get hurt cleaning this large place by yourself.”

“Are you worrying about me right now young master?”

“Of course.”

“I think I am moved.”

“But, maybe I want this manor to be cleaned a bit better.”

“Ah...it would have been better if you hadn't said that last

sentence.”

“Hahaha.”

Although I had a manor, I still stayed at the inn.

I was only visiting since it was the first day, but from now I will operate it in secret separate from the Byuk Clan. I instructed Kong Soo Chan to do the same, and operate secretly.

That afternoon, Baek Pyo brought two people with him when he came to see me.

“There are people I have to introduce you to.”

The people that he introduced me to were Baek Pyo’s new subordinates Yang Chung and Myung Do. They were originally members of the Fierce Guard Sect but they resigned from their work and became Baek Pyo’s new subordinates.

“He is my master.”

Yang Chung and Myung Do were both surprised to see me. It seems that Baek Pyo didn’t describe them to me what type of person I was.

Since I was so young it may have surprised them, but maybe it could have sparked some interest.

They were thinking along the line of, ‘Since I was someone that Baek Pyo would receive as master, I must have potential as a martial artist.’

“I am called Yang Chung.”

“I am called Myung Do.”

Baek Pyo emphasized their loyalty to him once more, “They are like my family.”

So I said, “Since Warrior Baek trusts them, I will also trust them. But I will still test them.”

“Yes!”

I smiled. The most important thing that I needed right now was loyal subordinates. Subordinates that I could trust.

No matter how much money you had, no matter how many people you can gathered, everything would disappear if you didn’t pick the right person. They would be gone just as fast as they came.

After sending the two of them away I was with Baek Pyo alone. Then I gave him a letter from his wife.

“Here take this.”

It was the letter that his wife, Jung Young, asked me to give him. Reading the contents of the letter his eyes started to water. He probably wanted to see his wife and son.

He looked at me with fiery eyes. Most likely it would have said something along the line that my mother is taking care of them like family.

“What is it? Is there some part about it cursing at me?”

Baek Pyo didn’t know how to take a joke.

“No. There would never be something like that.”

He was someone who didn’t know how to take a joke, maybe it was because of my previous life.

However, it was too soon to end this mood. Since I had a surprise for him still.

“Now, take this.”

I gave him a bag. When he opened the bag and looked, he was surprised. It was full of bank notes!

“There are three hundred thousand nyang in there.”

Baek Pyo was once again surprised. Although he saw something like this numerous time when he was still protecting me, this was his first time handling such a large amount of money.

“Can you make a Secret Corps with this amount of money?”

“A Secret Corps?”

“I don’t care how many people are in it. There can be ten or hundred. But they must be fully capable of accomplishing any mission. I want you to create the ‘Ultimate Secret Corps’”

Looking down at the money one more time, Baek Pyo looked determined. Just thinking about creating such a Corps made him excited. He was also moved that I trusted him with such an important task as well as gave him this huge sum of money without hesitation.

“Please, leave it to me.”

This wasn’t the only thing I was going to give him.

I took out the Heavenly Origin Sword from my waist and gave it to him.

“What is this?”

“It is a gift. Please use this sword from now on.”

“Isn’t this the sword that you were using?”

“Didn’t I get a better sword because of you?”

Baek Pyo already knew that there was no sword in the world that could ever compare to Divine Sword of King Shura.

“Can I take it out?”

I nodded and he took the sword out of the sheath.

Shiinng

Seeing the blade of the sword Baek Pyo was surprised because it wasn’t an ordinary blade.

“It’s a divine sword.” His voice was flustered. “But it feels like I’ve seen it somewhere.”

“Divine swords give off similar feelings.”

I only used the Heavenly Origin Sword for a few months in my previous life, and that was a long time ago. Since I disguised it,

there was no way for Baek Pyo to recognize it. Just with him realizing that it was familiar to him showed how keen his senses were.

“I can’t take something like this.” He returned it to me.

Then I returned it back to him and said, “A man who is going to become the leader of Ultimate Secret Corps should at least have something like this.”

“Master.”

It still seems that he didn’t want to take it.

“Yes, this is a very precious sword, but how can it be more important than you? To tell you the truth this is not a gift but my shackles. A shackle so that you can never leave my side, and you still don’t want to take this sword?”

He couldn’t resist anymore. He was reaffirming his loyalty right now.

I treated his wife and son like family, I trusted him with the money to set up a secret corps, and now I was giving him a divine sword. How could he not give his full loyalty to me?

“I will take your shackles with pride.”

Next, I called Silver and Spoon.

To be honest I didn't trust them completely yet.

Of course, they had done the tasks that I asked them wonderfully, but that wasn't enough they weren't picked by me, but Jung Yeo.

So I decided to divide my trust. I wasn't going to test too harshly.

“Here is fifty thousand nyang.”

Seeing this large amount of money the two of them were surprised.

“I want you to create an information sect with this. Of course, it will be impossible to create an information sect that expands the whole Central Plain, so I want you to focus on Mu Han and San Dong right now.”

If they used up all of the fifty thousand nyang I was going to give them fifty thousand nyang more.

The total amount that I was going to invest in this was three hundred thousand nyang.

I would determine their value and loyalty by the result of this.

“I know some who are reliable.”

“I know a few as well.”

I nodded and said, “After you create an information sect I will personally create another sect that will support you.”

That was the corps that Baek Pyo was creating.

“Ah! Thank You!”

They were happier than when they received their money. When I first gave them their order I took care of their safety. Since I am taking care of their safety for the second time they were truly moved.

I already knew, if things went as planned I must take good care of them. If I lose in the information war then I will lose in the actual battle.

“I believe the information sect is the most important.”

The two of them were showing their willingness, “We will never betray your trust.”

“Good!”

The two of them left the inn.

The last person that I called was Kwang Du.

“Do you have something for me?”

“Of course.”

Kwang Du’s eyes brightened.

“I only have you, young master! What is it? Is it the cultivation medicine?”

“Something better!”

“Ohhh! Is it an elixir of youth?”

“Something better!”

I took a wine bottle from my bag.

“Can it be... Ehh, of course it can’t be.”

“I just want us to share a drink.”

“What! Just a drink? You gave others sword, money, and trust but for me, you just give me wine?”

“I wanted to give you something but I gave it all away.”

“I know, I know how you are. You believe that things will be spoiled if you keep it for too long.”

Although Kwang Du was pouting he didn't feel all that bad.

Sharing the last drink with him, he knew how much it meant.

As we were exchanging drinks we talked about things that we didn't have to time to talk about.

“How are Gaju-nim and Madam? Are they well?”

“They are the same.”

“What about Song He?”

“She is well. She is growing really fast.”

“She is at the time when one grows fast. It's not been so long but I want to see everyone. How is Chief Kwan? Is he training like a madman still?”

“He may surpass you soon at this rate.”

“Shit! I need to start training in the morning.”

About the time we finished the bottle Kwang Du asked me a question, “... How is Miss Do?”

“Do Soon-ee? She got more beautiful.”

He gave a sigh.

“I don't think it is over.”

“I know that you are trying to console me.”

“No, I am not trying to console you.”

“What do you mean?”

“I think you rushed things a bit too much. You should have taken things slower since it was love at first sight.”

“That's what I think as well, but do you want me to hate her? It's

already a thing of the past.”

“Since it didn’t end badly, I still think there is hope.”

“Isn’t it already too late?”

“A human’s heart changes at least twelve times a day. That is the nature of a human. Do you think a girl's heart is any different?”

Kwang Du’s eyes brightened.

“So what should I do now?”

“You must show her how much you changed. So that Do Soon-ee will have second thoughts.

There was this side of this person? Had he this ability? Something like that.”

“Just like you young master?”

It seems that’s how I was to Kwang Du, to Song Hwa Rin, and to everyone.

“Yes, like me.”

He said with a sigh, “This problem between a man and a woman

is too difficult.”

“Yes, it is very difficult.”

“Do you think I can do it?”

“That’s not important. What’s important is that you do it.”

Seeing me raise up my glass he roughly bumped his glass with mine.

There was new hope in Kwang Du’s face. Yes, he was still in his springtime of youth, this was how he should live his life.

I didn’t need subordinates who were just strong. I wanted all my subordinates to become happy.

Since unhappiness could hinder their full potential.

Since that was the thing that I wanted to achieve as well.

Chapter 78: Some Things That Can't Be Caught In The Web (3)

Ho Yeon Tak was kneeling in the middle of the Ho Yeon School's Grand Pavillion. Behind him were all the disciples who went to San Dong together with him. Some of them had bandages but no one was seriously injured or killed.

Since Ho Yeon Nam died and Yeom Hwa was gravely injured both sides didn't know what to do. As this happened so suddenly, neither side had the opportunity to wipe the other out.

Since Ho Yeon Tak was a descendant of Ho Yeon Sae he was different from ordinary disciples.

Looking down from the master's seat was Ho Yeon School's Master Ho Yeon Sae. The person that died at San Dong was his third brother Ho Yeon Nam.

He had on a white martial artist robe with a drawing of a tiger on the back. Although his beard was white, he was full of energy showing his power and authority over his school.

Ho Yeon Sae had his eyes closed suppressing his anger. In truth however, he was just pretending that he was suppressing his anger. Although Ho Yeon Nam was his relative he wasn't too close to him so he wasn't deeply saddened.

But he needed to act like he was saddened right now so that it

would justify to the world what he was about to do next.

The person standing next to Ho Yeon Sae was his second brother Ho Yeon Choon. His eyes were cold as if he was about to punish the disciples.

Aside from the disciples who just came back from San Dong these two were the only other people who were inside the room.

Ho Yeon Sae slowly opened his eyes and asked, “How did this happen?”

“Even your disciple doesn’t know. Master suddenly drew his blade and attacked Yeom Hwa.”

“You punk!” As he said this, his ki filled the whole room.

And Ho Yeon Tak, as well as other disciples, were very uncomfortable, others were having a difficult time breathing.

“What kind of nonsense are you spewing?”

“How can I report some lies to you Master?”

“So Ho Yeon Nam truly attacked first?”

“Yes, that’s how it is Master.” All the other disciples replied.

Ho Yeon Sae looked at Ho Yeon Choon next to him. And Ho Yeon Choon gave a single nod without changing the expression on his face. Meaning that he agreed that it was within Ho Yeon Nam's character to act in such a way.

Deep inside, Ho Yeon Choon hated Ho Yeon Nam. It was because he couldn't let go of his hate from back when they were still struggling for power. Although Ho Yeon Nam was the eventually winner Ho Yeon Choon couldn't accept it.

Ho Yeon Sae gave a deep sigh.

When he first read the report, he thought it was false. However, if Ho Yeon Nam truly was the first to raise his blade, then this would turn into a bigger issue. The problem was that he raised his blade first at an official meeting between the two parties.

There was no way that the Decimator, Yeom Hwa, of Heavenly Dao Gate who was famed for his pride and cruelty would overlook this.

Rather than being rewarded for their service they were in a situation where they were about to pay the compensation fee.

“You are dismissed. Take care of your injuries.”

“Yes, Master.”

Although all the disciples left Ho Yeon Tak remained and said, “Gaju-nim, I have something to tell you.”

“What is it?”

He told him about the time when Ya Chun came over to bribe them.

After finishing the story Ho Yeon Sae’s face grew darker. If things came to light then it would seem as if Ho Yeon Nam attacked Yeom Hwa after taking the bribe of the Dark Guild. It could impact the dignity of the school if it was found out.

“Do the other disciples know about this as well?”

“No, only me.”

“Make sure you never tell to another soul.”

“I will obey Master.” And Ho Yeon Tak left the room.

Now only Ho Yeon Sae and Ho Yeon Choon were left in the room.

Ho Yeon Sae said with an ugly expression, “Idiot. I should have known, he was the one who even volunteered to do this.”

He had no other choice but to send Ho Yeon Nam to do this since

no one else was willing. He also didn't want to give up on the two hundred thousand nyang.

"I guess we must meet them to salvage anything from the situation."

Hearing Ho Yeon Sae's word, Ho Yeon Choon nodded, "I will get in contact with them."

"Then do so."

"But..." Ho Yeon Choon stopped as he looked at Ho Yeon Tak leave, "What will you do with him? If it gets revealed that we took a bribe..."

Ho Yeon Sae just silently looked at Ho Yeon Choon. Although he didn't say anything, he knew what he meant.

Manager Kong was in his room all day working, and Kwang Du started training again.

Hearing that Kwan He vastly improve must have motivated him. This friendly competition was a very good thing for a martial artist.

Kwang Du was training very hard.

I left him to his own accord. Although there were some parts that caught my attention, I didn't do anything since it could do more harm than benefit for him.

It was better to allow him to realize it on his own and come to me for help himself. Then when he does so I would help him unhesitatingly.

I started my own training a distance away from Kwang Du since I knew that my training would interrupt him. He was still at a very crucial point where he needed to focus on himself.

I sat in a lotus position on the peak of the mountain meditating.

Since I was cultivating with my Heavenly Protection Cultivation Technique all the time except when I slept I was constantly building up my energy. Now it would take me less than a year until I reached the hundred and twenty years worth of ki. Although I could shorten this length with cultivation medicine, I decided not to do so.

There were other places where I needed to spend my money, and since now I can freely use my fourth technique I don't need to be in a rush to unlock the fifth.

Today's training was image training. Although I gained enlightenment in these couple of months through my interaction with others, it wasn't the only way I could progress. I was image training the Practices of the White Crane Art. I was imagining each

movement as I battled my imaginary opponent.

My opponent was the leader of the Demonic Alliance since he was the strongest opponent that I had ever fought in my life.

Since we had exchanged blows on many different occasions, I clearly knew how strong he was and what he was capable of.

So I visualized him as my opponent as I used the White Crane art to attack him.

On our first exchange, my skull was busted open.

On our second exchange, I was cut in half.

This was to be expected since I knew that I couldn't fight against him with the White Crane Art yet.

However, could I kill him if I fully master the White Crane Art? I didn't know yet.

This time I used the combination of the two styles to fight against him.

It was a very difficult fight since I used a combination of sword arts and weaponless arts.

This exchange showed how futile it was fighting a true Saint Level Master with a combined art.

But I didn't give up. And I would not give up. I would find a way to perfectly merge these two together.

After Kwang Du finished his training I took him out to eat.

We didn't go to the restaurant near where we stayed, but went to a restaurant near the Alliance's Headquarters. It was a good opportunity to listen to the current news as well as get some air.

"Food tastes the best after a very hard training session."

"Eat more, I'll order some more for you if you want."

"Young master, lets have a drink."

"Sounds good."

I ordered some wine and snacks.

After finishing his glass Kwang Du said in a happy tone, "Kaa, there is nothing more that I need. The drink after training is a real drink."

I agree. It was truly fun being around Kwang Du.

“It seems that the buzz in town is about what happened.”

The whole restaurant was bustling with the talks about the Ho Yeon School and Heavenly Dao Gate. Since it was a clash between two very strong forces, it was the center of attention.

However it seems that everyone had a different take on it.

Some were saying that it was Ho Yeon Nam’s fault for attacking first, others were blaming Yeom Hwa for killing him.

Some were even saying that the Ho Yeon School would be wiped out, while others did not.

Then Kwang Du asked me with a worried expression, “Will Ho Yeon School really be wiped out? It is one of the Four Great Powers of Kang Ho.”

“Who knows?”

“What young master?”

“It is difficult raising a clan but taking it down is a very easy task.”

Big clans were just like big building. Shake their foundations and everything will crumble by itself.

Then a man suddenly rushed into the restaurant and spread a new, “Have you all heard? One of the disciples of Ho Yeon School committed suicide.”

“What? If you mean the disciple do you mean Ho Yeon Nam’s disciple?”

“Yes, him. I heard his name was Ho Yeon Tak. Anyway, it seems like he felt ashamed for not being able to protect his master so he committed suicide.”

This new surprised me. From what I can tell from seeing him once, he didn’t seem like a weak person who would break that easily. He could feel ashamed for the death of his master but to take his own life? A cold breeze swept through my heart.

Others in the restaurant were mourning his death.

“That’s too bad.”

“It’s sad to see a youth who was still blossoming in his springtime take his own life.”

“He seems like a real disciple of a famous school.”

They all said something about him.

And Kwang Du added, “Isn’t it a waste?”

I also poured down a drink on the floor to mourn his death.

Then I said after filling up my glass, “Did he really take his own life? What if he didn’t?”

Seeing my expression Kwang Du said, “Eh, why are you saying such thing?”

I looked into my cup. It seems that famous clans and schools would become so inhumane as to kill off their own members to maintain their reputation and dignity.

“He could have taken his own life, but he could also not have.”

By killing off one their own disciple who wasn’t even fully blossomed they were able to place the blame away from them. Although it was Ho Yeon Nam who first attacked Yeom Hwa, now all the blame will be placed on Yeom Hwa.

“Since you don’t know which side is right ... all the more reason for you to train.”

“Why?”

“To know the truth, you must be strong.”

Since this is a place where the strong ruled and weak become their food.

Kwang Du looked at me with a stern face and said, “Yes young master, I will train diligently.”

If the Ho Yeon School truly killed him and disguised it as suicide... then they went over the line.

They will one day pay the price for going over that line.

A single youth was sitting beside a riverbank.

It was the Number One who received the report from Number Seven months ago.

He was just looking at the water crashing into the bank when he finally raised his fishing pole.

Then another man with a straw hat approached him. Surprisingly, the person who visited him was Ho Yeon School's Ho Yeon Choon.

“Is there good catch today?”

“I was here since the morning, but it seems today isn’t the day.”

“I heard that fishing can also be considered training.”

“There is such a saying.”

“But I am not very good at sitting down like this.”

“But fishing is just like training.”

Ho Yeon Choon looked at him with a weird look, “What do you mean?”

“There is calmness in the stream of water. Within that calmness is the flow. Just waiting and watching patiently for the right time to attack with the fishing pole just like a sword.”

“So that’s how it is.” But Ho Yeon Choon didn’t really care what he said. ‘If you think of it like that, whatever you do isn’t it training?’

Ho Yeon Choon stopped his banter and moved onto to the real talk. “I don’t know if you know it or not but we had a little conflict with the Heavenly Dao Gate.”

Then Number One coldly said, “Didn’t you say you were going to get two hundred thousand nyang from the Dark Guild of San Dong?”

Ho Yeon Choon felt bad. He didn't have to bring out the talk about money but it seemed like he was stabbing at where it hurt.

“Although we minimized our losses I don't know how the Heavenly Dao Gate will respond. Especially Yeom Hwa.”

Everyone knew what sort of person Yeom Hwa was. Even by killing Ho Yeon Tak they knew that this matter wouldn't come to an end.

“I heard that he is headed to Mu Han to meet Ma Bong Gi.”

Then Number One nodded as if he already knew about the matter. He gave an impression that he knew everything that was happening.

“I understand. We will take care of this matter in our end.”

“Thank you.”

Then Number One said, “It's only this time. Make sure this never happens again.”

With a cold gaze Ho Yeon Choon asked, “What are you trying to imply here?”

Number One's sight was back into the river. Then he coldly said,

“It’s just a warning.”

Then Ho Yeon Choon left without saying anything.

After some time someone else approached him and Number One said, “Do you know the reason why I love water?”

The person who he was saying this to was Number Seven.

“I do not.”

“It was because my father drowned in water.”

Then Number Seven said emotionlessly, “So that’s how it is.”

Number One was smiling at her response. Since it was him who trained her to become like this.

“Take Midget with you and take care of this.”

Without a word Number Seven left the place.

After watching her leave Number One’s eyes were back on the river.

Chapter 79: One Shot, One Kill (1)

The person who entered the Mengju Pavilion was Yeom Hwa.

The title decimator described him really well. He was muscular, had a big build, and his face looked like that of a wild animal. His eyes were brimming with an evil look, and his face looked like it was from your nightmares.

He still had wounds on his chest. He didn't put any medication or bandages around his chest since he believed that it made him look weak, so it was festering.

But in front of Ma Bong Gi, he looked like a well-trained dog.

“If we go on like this other Kang Ho-In will not even bother to give us face.”

“Isn't Ho Yeon Nam already dead?”

“It's not enough.”

“Then?”

“We must kill all who were present. So that they won't disrespect us again.”

Sa Ma Chun who was standing beside him gave him a disdainful

look.

Although Yeom Hwa gave him a look, he didn't back down. Originally you were not supposed to act like this in front of a Chancellor, but Yeom Hwa was a man who was fearless.

Then Ma Bong Gi said with a smile, "One of their disciples committed suicide, rather some are saying that I should punish you."

"The weak should all die."

"Hahaha." Ma Bong Gi laughed, "Go back to your place for now."

"Understood."

He marched out of the Mengju Pavillion and gave Sa Ma Chun a disdainful look.

"Since he didn't complete his mission he rather should be punished. But him acting like that, isn't that too brash?"

"He must be angry. He will be alright after a few days."

"Why are you keeping him so close?"

"Since his skills are good and he doesn't have much thoughts."

“What?”

“There are not many people like him. The more skilled you are the quicker you roll your head. On the contrary you are someone who has many thoughts in his head. In your opinion would you like to have subordinates like you or have a subordinate like him who does everything without thinking?”

Sa Ma Chun couldn't say anything. Although this was just a comparison, he knew what Ma Bong Gi was getting at.

“Of course I will pick subordinates like him. Since they will follow you like dogs.”

Ma Bong Gi started laughing, “Yes, even if they plot something they are still playing to the tune of your music. Hahaha.”

“The public sentiment isn't on our side. It seems like we must cover up this case.”

“I understand.”

Sa Ma Chun left the pavilion. Ma Bong Gi was different now that he was the mengju. He just simply felt different.

The Information Sect was being created rather quickly. Silver and Spoon were very fast at doing their task.

“We are filling it with members who are reliable.”

“Don’t be bothered with the money, so please pick the best and the most reliable men.”

“Don’t worry.”

I started to trust them more, not only that, I was also treating them better.

“Yeom Hwa met with the Mengju.”

I told Silver and Spoon that while they were creating this sect, they were to watch any movement in the Alliance Headquarters.

“He is heading to the Best Restaurant in Mu Han with the Five Divine Swords.”

The Best Restaurant in Mu Han was the restaurant that I took Kwang Du to a few days ago. It was rather close to the Alliance building so there were many famous people there.

“Why didn’t he go to some place that was quieter?”

“Well, from the beginning he wasn’t a man who likes the quiet. He likes to show off in front of others.”

“Good work. Please watch your actions from now on.”

“I understand sir.”

“New forget. The ones who are important are you, not the information.”

“Yes, sir!”

I knew that some words like this can become a great influence to them.

After saying that I headed toward that restaurant.

There were many people inside the restaurant. Rather than being customers they were more like people who were here to watch something.

“He is the Decimator Yeom Hwa.”

“Wow look at his size.”

“I heard he killed Ho Yeon Nam in a single blow.”

The restaurant was bustling with people talking. Since he was in front of them, who would dare to say anything bad about him.

Yeom Hwa was drinking his wine in the middle of the restaurant. It was after he finished most of his food and there were a couple of bottles of alcohol lying around.

The restaurant was empty since everyone left in a hurry after seeing him arrive. And they were all looking at him from the outside.

This was how he was able to use the whole restaurant to himself, so he drank without restraint.

And the Divine Swords were sitting diagonally in the four corners of him. They were taking up the whole restaurant for themselves.

These pieces of trash.

This was what I thought. The more of an expert you become the more you should try your best to not disturb these people.

But he was doing the complete opposite.

After getting the signal from Yeom Hwa the Divine Swords started pouring out what was in the box.

“This is the present that his lordship is presenting you.”

“Wahhh!”

People were quick to pick up the money that was lying on the floor.

Watching Yeom Hwa’s expression disgusted me. He had the look as if he was a king in front of all these people.

Through the crowd of the people, I saw someone.

A woman who was staring at Yeom Hwa rather than the money on the floor.

Surprisingly it was Number Seven.

Who would have thought that I would meet her at such a place?

Sensing that I was looking at her she looked back at me and we exchanged glances. However, she didn’t recognize me as I had a face alteration mask on back then.

When Number Seven turned her body to leave that place someone said something.

“Hey punk! Are you scared of the heavens?”

Everyone's sight was turned to that person.

She was an elderly woman. She seemed rather tired as if she walked a long distance, but her eyes were still brimming with life.

Beside her was another young woman who looked like the elderly woman. By a single glance, one could tell that they had some sort of relationship with one another.

They used the money as an excuse to say something.

“Who might you be and do you know who you are talking to?”

“I am Mae Rang and the person who died because of you was my grandson Ho Yeon Tak.”

Surprisingly, it was Ho Yeon Tak's grandmother. Everyone was surprised at her arrival.

But the person who was the most surprised was me. Hearing her say Mae Rang, I recalled my past. She was someone that I knew from my youth.

What surprised me the most was the girl who was next to Mae Rang looked exactly how she looked all those years ago.

Mae Rang and I were both from the same village, so she used to

follow me and call me brother and she used to say that she was going to marry me when she got older.

This was when I was still a young and running around the Central Plains gaining fame so while I didn't have any intimate feelings for her, but I considered her my little sister.

Whenever I came home I saw her, and she became more beautiful as time went on. But that was the time when I was crazy for strength that I didn't see anything around me.

She lost interest in me after her she passed her teens and from what I heard she fell in love with someone from the Ho Yeon School. It turns out that Ho Yeon Tak was her grandson.

It seems that fate was now playing its game on me.

Mae Rang looked tired as if she came a long way.

Then one of the Divine Swords said, "So you are the grandmother of that disciple who killed himself because he couldn't protect his master."

"You punk! My Tak-ee wasn't someone weak like that!"

She started swinging her cane. But he easily dodged and gave her a little nudge as if he was being attacked.

Right as she was about to hit the floor I caught her. If I didn't catch her she would have been hurt after hitting the floor.

She looked at me and thanked me, "Thank you, young man."

Looking at her up close she still had traces of her youthful looks. She was like a little sister to me, seeing her like this showed the flow of time.

"You should stop it here."

Then the man said, "What are you, her grandson?"

"No, I am someone who was just watching."

"Then you should just keep watching, why are you all up in an elder's business?"

"Aren't you the same? Isn't it disrespectful treating your elder like that?"

Some were laughing but the rest were just watching in dead silence expecting something to happen. Then Yeom Hwa, who was drinking from inside the room broke the table causing all of the food and wine bottles fell onto the floor.

"It's getting too noisy outside, I can't eat my food with all this noise."

He got up from his seat and headed towards the second floor.

Then the man approached me and said, “You will regret it.”

I didn’t say anything.

The Divine Swords followed Yeom Hwa upstairs and the people who were watching slowly left one by one, and it seems that Number Seven left without me noticing.

Then the young woman who was next to Mae Rang bowed to me, “Thank you for helping me. My name is Ho Yeon Sook.”

“My name is Byuk Lee Dan.”

“I will never forget your help today.”

“No need to thank me.”

“Thank you young man.”

“Please take care of yourself.”

The two of them were walking in the direction of the Alliance Headquarters.

I didn't ask them what they were here for, but I could tell. Also from listening to her I could tell Ho Yeon Tak death was not by suicide.

But would they be successful with what they wanted to do with Ma Bong Gi as the Mengju?

I slowly turned my direction away from them

I didn't take the main road but an alleyway. I knew that someone was tailing me.

After some time I came to a stop where no one was present. It was a plain and clear road without much hindrance.

So the man who was trailing me had no choice but to show himself.

It was the one who I had a little bout with earlier.

“Have you been trailing me?”

He replied coldly, “I told you didn't I? That you will regret it.”

“You are really in a rush. Following me right as I left.”

“I never postpone other people’s death.”

“You want to kill me? Why do you want to kill me?”

He laughed as he said, “You gave me no face in front of all those people. I never let those who disrespect me live.”

“How did I disrespect you?”

“Are you fearless, asking me all sort of questions?”

“Is that your only reason? Do you really have to kill someone for such a petty reason?”

“What other reason do I need?”

With this, I knew how this man lived his life. He lived his life just as he told me. Whenever someone gave him no face, he would kill them.

Even if his crimes were found out, the Heavenly Dao Gate used their influence to cover it. If you do something once you were bound to do it again, and again until eventually it became a habit.

But this time he met me.

“You really didn’t have to give your life for that elderly woman. In your next life just watch, alright punk?”

“Did you tell your master that you are going to kill me?”

“To kill you I don’t even have to report anything.”

“So only you came.”

I looked around to see if there were anyone present. Just in case Number Seven might be here I sent out my ki to search the area. But there was no one.

Now I showed my true colors as well.

“Since that is your reason for killing someone, then I have just as much reason to kill you. You should start praying.”

“What bullshit are you spewing?”

“Pray to the tree, the leaf, the bird whatever suits you, since this will be your last moment.”

He started laughing, “Crazy punk, Hahaha.”

I started laughing with him.

The moment he stopped laughing he charged at me. He unsheathed his sword very quickly.

Shiing!

It was a quick draw.

If it wasn't me it probably would have been a beautiful fight.

I dodged his sword easily, went behind him and kicked him. Even he wouldn't have expected such a reaction out of me.

Bang!

With a loud noise it sounded like his whole arm broke.

“Uahhh!”

His shoulder was in shambles and he was leaning on one side.

He looked at me with a painful expression, “Please, please wait! Uahh!”

He finally understood what position he was in.

“Why should I do that?”

“I have made a mistake.”

“You are really quick at realizing your mistake. Only if you could have drawn your sword that fast.”

“Please spare me! I’ll give you anything that you want.”

“And if I let you live? Won’t you bring all of your friends?”

“No, I would never do that”

“You who kills just because of one word would never let it go after I broke your shoulder. Do you think I am that dumb as to play your little game?”

“Please Spare ME! I will give you everything!”

I kicked him in the chin.

Crack!

His jaw broke on the spot and he was sent flying.

As I landed I executed the Seismic Stomp on his face.

Boom!

His face was crushed and he died on the spot.

I slowly left that place. Some ten paces away I turned around and looked at the corpse.

My sword lightly sliced through the air.

Shiinng!

Booom!

As I executed the third technique his corpse disintegrated.

I spoke to where his body once was, “You asked me what I wanted right? I want you to disappear from this world.” I turned back and left the place. Not even the crows gathered at that place.

Chapter 80: One Shot, One Kill (2)

After I got back to the inn, I soaked myself in hot water.

Sinking into the hot water, it felt as if all my sleepiness and weariness were melting away.

I recalled the scene when I saw Number Seven. Her cold and emotionless expression. Although it had been a while she didn't seem to have changed.

I also remembered the last thing she said to me, "Is it really true that the lotus flower blooms in a muddy pond?"

I remembered her smile as I answered yes.

I wonder why she was here?

Was she was here to observe Yeom Hwa? Was it like that time with Ma Jung Soo?

No, something about her was different than before. The way she observed Yeom Hwa was different than when she was observing Ma Jung Soo.

After I finished my bath, I went downstairs to the restaurant to have a meal.

Then Silver came over to make his report, “There is a rumor going around that when Yeom Hwa came out of the Mengju’s Pavillion, he said that all the Ho Yeon disciples who were at the meeting must be killed.”

“He must be a crazy one.”

“Yes he is.”

The problem was the rumor itself. This means that Ma Bong Gi was siding with Yeom Hwa to a certain extent. If not then this rumor would have never started.

“So he must be getting some consideration from Ma Bong Gi.”

“He was someone who did all sort of things since they were both in the Heavenly Dao Gate.”

This was why he was called the Decimator of Heavenly Dao Gate.

“Make sure to be extra careful when observing him. If you lower your guard for even a second you could all be wiped out. I am certain that there is another organization that is watching them. Even I don’t know who they are, but one this is for certain. This organization is very big and extremely secretive.”

“How big do you think it is?”

“As big as the Murim Alliance or even bigger.”

Silver was surprised.

I nodded and emphasized my thoughts once more, “Be extra careful.”

“Understood sir. We will observe them from far away.”

“And one more thing. Someone by the name Mae Rang and Ho Yeon Sook must have visited the Murim Alliance Headquarters. Make sure to track their movements as well.”

Silver left after giving me a nod.

Although my bowl was still half full, I lowered my chopsticks.

I recalled Mae Rang’s face. Recalling my childhood when I used to run around with Mae Rang, it wasn’t right for me to disregard her considering I was practically her elder brother.

Yeom Hwa was sitting in the middle of the restaurant just like he did the day before.

Of course, there were no other customers inside the restaurant.

Although the owner was very depressed because Yeom Hwa was ruining his sales, he couldn't say anything.

Just like the day before, there was a crowd of people watching from the outside. Even more people show up after hearing that Yeom Hwa was spreading money.

But of course, there were some who didn't come just for the money. They stayed back because they believed that Yeom Hwa was buying the public sentiment with money.

Although more people came to watch him, Yeom Hwa was in a terrible mood. After getting attacked by Ho Yeon Nam he was feeling terrible. He could have killed someone like Ho Yeon Nam easily as swatting a fly but he nearly lost his life.

Thus, his pride was hurt.

‘Son of a...’

Unless he killed all those who were present at the meeting he wouldn't be satisfied, but he knew that that wouldn't happen that easily. He wanted to do it so that he doesn't look weak and others would be intimidated by him.

As he was drinking his wine, Yeom Hwa looked at the place where the first Divine Sword should be.

“I don't see your first brother?”

“Elder brother has been away since yesterday.”

“Since yesterday?”

Yeom Hwa made a weird look. The first Divine Sword wasn't the type to leave for an extended period of time without notifying him.

“Do you know where he went?”

“Elder brother hadn't told us where he was going.”

“Useless punk!”

The three members of the Divine swords lowered their heads as they received Yeom Hwa's yelling.

Then one of them asked, “Could it be? Because of the old woman?”

“You mean Ho Yeon Tak's grandmother?”

“He left right after that incident. Then we lost contact with him afterward.”

“Do you know where they are?”

“Of course, the way that old women talked bothered me so we sent someone to tail her.”

“So?”

“She went to see the Mengju-nim.”

“Mengju-nim?” Yeom Hwa’s face turned even more ugly.

“But, she was turned away since he didn’t want to see her.”

“That old wretch!” Yeom Hwa was yelling as if he wasn’t afraid of the heavens.

“So first brother didn’t come back after meeting her?”

“I am not certain but I am sure that is a possibility.”

“Then bring her here then!”

“yes.”

The second brother quickly left the restaurant.

This wasn’t just for the first brother, but he needed to scare her so that she would never go back to the Alliance headquarters to see the Mengju. Teach her that it wasn’t good to hold grudges for the

death of her grandson.

He said after emptying the bottle of his wine, “My luck is so rotten these days.”

“Grandmother, you must eat.”

Ho Yeon Sook brought some food to Mae Rang’s bed.

“I don’t want anything. You eat it.”

“You can’t be like this. You need to be strong.”

Yesterday the two of them went to the Alliance headquarters to meet with the Mengju but they couldn’t. No matter how much they begged it was of no use. Who were they to the Mengju? The Mengju was a very busy person so he wouldn’t come out to meet with them.

By going through proper procedures it would take at least two months before they had a chance to see him.

“Grandmother, you must eat so that you can remain strong. So that we can go see him again today.”

But she still didn't move.

Then Ho Yeon Sook used her last option. This was something that always worked.

“Then I will starve as well.”

Then Mae Rang slowly moved, “You evil wretch.”

There were tear in Ho Yeon Sook's eyes. She knew how her grandmother raised her and her brother. Although they was Ho Yeon blood in them, they were from the weakest branch. And when their parent's died that was the final straw.

After that, her grandmother did everything to raise the two of them.

She remembered how happy her grandmother was when her brother became a personal disciple of Ho Yeon Nam.

‘Grandmother.’

She was very concerned about the health of her grandmother.

When the two of them came downstairs to the restaurant and as they were about to order some food they discovered someone.”

“Oh? Are you the young man from yesterday?”

After seeing me they greeted me. Although it may have looked like a coincidence to them, I was waiting for them here after receiving the report from Silver.

“Elder Mae and Miss Ho Yeon. How about some food since we are here?”

Ho Yeon Sook looked at her grandmother and Mae Rang nodded.

“Thank you young man, for your help yesterday. Let this old woman buy you a drink.”

“Thank you.”

They sat across from me and ordered some food and drinks.

Then Mae Rang drank alcohol as if she was thirsty for water.

“Grandma, please slow down.”

“I am about to burst.”

I asked, “Can I ask you about your situation?”

Because of what happened yesterday they were in a rather bad

mood, but it seemed that they were happy to talk about it with me.

Mae Rang told me about her story. How she was a village girl who had the opportunity to meet someone from Ho Yeon School. However even if they had the Ho Yeon blood no one was listening to their story.

When Mae Rang finished her story, both she and Ho Yeon Sook's eyes started water.

“My brother was someone who would never take his own life.”

“Yes, he was someone who would never do that.”

She knew that her grandson was talented and his will was strong. This was how he was able to become Ho Yeon Nam's disciple.

“Then why have you come here?”

“To see the Mengju-nim and prove that my brother's death wasn't suicide. My brother...”

She couldn't finish.

From this I could tell that her brother's death wasn't suicide. Don't worry you two, I will get to the bottom of this.

“Don’t worry. If he still says that he wouldn’t meet me. I am going to set up a tent there.”

I looked at Mae Rang. She looked all wrinkly and old. I could see her love for her grandchildren, how she would go to the ends of hell to get revenge for her grandson.

And fate had brought her back to me.

Was I going to turn her away because I was busy? Never.

I smiled at the both of them, “I am sure something good will happen.”

Then I said my greetings and left.

As I was leaving the restaurant, another man who was beside me grabbed the two of them and said, “If you don’t want to die come with me quietly.”

The people who were at the Mu Han’s best restaurant moved aside to make way.

The three people who entered the restaurant were Mae Rang, Ho Yeon Sook as well as second brother.

The people outside started talking about them since there were some who were present yesterday.

Then the second brother started tossing silver bars on the floor.

“This is something special given by my lordship.”

“Whaaa!” Everyone outside was amazed and was quick to pick up the silver for themselves.

Watching their expression Yeom Hwa made a grin.

Then Mae Rang stared at Yeom Hwa and asked, “Why have you brought us here?”

“Don’t get too excited old woman it’s bad for your health. I brought you here since I have something to ask you.”

“Then you should have come yourself, not bring me here. How can someone so young order an elder like myself.”

When Yeom Hwa made an evil expression Mae Ryang didn’t flinch.

“Why? Do you want to beat up an elder like me?”

“I don’t beat up the elderly.” Then he looked at Ho Yeon Sook.

Mae Rang flinched. She didn't care what they did to her, but her grandchild, she wouldn't stand it. Because of reasons like this she wanted to come here alone. But her granddaughter had insisted to come with.

“What is it that you want to ask?” It seem like Mae Rang lost this exchange.

“Did someone meet you yesterday?”

“Who are you talking about?” Mae Rang made an expression as if she didn't know anything and it didn't seem like she was hiding anything.

Yeom Hwa took a gulp from the wine bottle.

‘Shit! Then where did he go?’

Number Seven was observing the whole situation from a top of a roof.

There was someone else beside her. Since he was short and had a youthful expression, he looked like a child. However, he was an adult who was small. He was the Midget who came with Number Seven for this mission.

He was one of the organization's top assassins.

There were a total of four top assassins in the organization and The Midget was one of them. There was no one who was able to live to tell the tale of his assassination.

If she brought The Midget with her then it meant that she was given the order to eliminate whoever her target was.

Number Seven silently told him, “Find a way to quickly eliminate him.”

“Did the higher ups really give the order?”

“Yes, they did.”

They had a weird relationship. Although she was giving the order the, The Midget’s position in the organization was much higher.

“Receiving the order to eliminate the Decimator of the Heavenly Dao Gate. Our organization is truly amazing.”

He didn’t say this because he hated his organization. It was because he was that excited to meet some fine prey.

“Eh? Whats happening right now?”

Number Seven looked at where he was looking at.

It seems that someone else was entering the restaurant.

I slowly walked into the restaurant.

“Stop!”

Second brother tried to stop me. I was able to see Mae Rang and Ho Yeon Sook’s silhouettes near Yeom Hwa.

Since I was wearing a face alternation mask and had changed my voice no one knew who I was.

“How dare you enter this place?”

“Isn’t this place a restaurant?”

“What?”

“Did you rent out the whole restaurant?”

I looked at the owner, but he couldn’t say anything.

Second brother looked at me as more and more people came to

watch.

Then Yeom Hwa said, “Let him enter. Isn’t it the more the merrier?”

Second brother allowed me to enter after giving me a weird look.

And I slowly entered the restaurant.

Chapter 81: One Shot, One Kill (3)

I sat down some distance away from Yeom Hwa and ordered my food and drink.

“Give me some wine and snacks here.”

After Yeom Hwa gave the owner a nod, he went inside to get the food and drink.

The Yeom Hwa I knew was an impatient and cruel person. There were two reasons why he was doing this. Either he wanted to play around with me for a bit before killing me or he felt threatened by me.

Yeom Hwa asked me, “Who are you?”

“Just a wanderer. I came here because I was hungry.”

Yeom Hwa laughed at my response.

“There are other restaurants beside this one. You didn’t have to come here.”

“Then why are you here? Why are you eating and drinking in front of all these people? If it was me

I wouldn’t be able to eat in front of all these people.”

He squinted his eyes. His instincts told him that I wasn't an ordinary person. So rather than using his fists, he was using his words to gauge at me.

I then laughed and said, "Ha, I understand. Sometimes you want to brag in front of people."

Then the one of the Divine Sword said, "This punk! Do you want to die?"

Then Yeom Hwa said, "Let's him be, they say even dogs aren't bothered when they eat."

Then I said to them, "If you touch me one more time I will kill you."

"This punk! You really want to do this?"

Yeom Hwa lifted his hand to stop him.

Then I started eating my food, "Delicious, now I know why you want to monopolize this place."

"What is it that you want?"

"I am just here for the food. No need for you to be too concerned with me."

Then I looked at Mae Rang and Ho Yeon Sook and said, “I think there are some people who are even braver than I am.”

Then Mae Rang said, “We were dragged here by them.”

Then the third divine sword said, “Shut up you old wretch!”

Although they got a better reputation since they tossed out silver bars today, treating the elderly like this was ruining their reputation faster than they could recover it.

Then I said in the place of the two of them, “She is just a child.”

“What?”

“Just talking to myself.”

The third Divine Sword was about to say something but Yeom Hwa raised his hand again.

“Are you from the Ho Yeon School?”

“I heard about that story as well. Didn’t you say that you would kill all the disciples that were present at the meeting?”

Then the people on the outside started chatting since this was

news that wasn't well known.

Yeom Hwa didn't hide this fact, rather he said in a louder voice, "Yes that's how it is, it's better if I could get rid of them all."

"Stop yapping!" Mae Rang screamed at Yeom Hwa but Ho Yeon Sook stopped her.

Then I asked Yeom Hwa, "Isn't this matter concluded already? Then why are you doing such thing? Is it because of your pitiful pride?"

"What?"

"Is your pride so great that you have to mow down those innocent young men?"

"Of course. How can those scarecrows be compared to me."

I could tell how many innocent people died at his hands so that he could become the Decimator.

Yesterday's event was an example, he would try to find any excuse to kill you.

These people didn't know how to control their anger. It was not because they couldn't but because they didn't have to do so.

“I think that you are more of a scarecrow than them.”

Then the second Divine Sword grabbed my shoulder, “You punk! Don’t you know where this is? And you rant? You are dead!”

“Didn’t I tell you before? If you touch me one more time you will die?”

I grabbed number two’s hand that was on my shoulder and swept him aside.

He lost his balance and did a flip in the direction that I turned him.

Crash!

He landed on one of the chairs as if it was a circus performance.

“Hahaha.”

The people who were outside started laughing and the sound reached inside.

But then the second Divine Sword didn’t move from where he had fallen.

The third Divine Sword rushed out to check on him and yelled,

“He is dead!”

The next moment. My hand raced through the air like a snake and found its mark on the third divine sword's neck.

It landed square on his adam's apple.

Crack!

After breaking his neck my hand came back to its original place.

Boom!

The third Divine Sword who had his neck broken fell to the floor on the spot after nodding his head back and forth a couple of times.

The third Divine Sword died in a single shot just like their second brother.

Then the fourth Divine Sword yelled, “You are seeking death!”

He charged at me with his sword drawn.

Shhiinnng!

Smack!

He flew out the window and landed outside the restaurant.

“Uahhh!”

Some of the crowd started screaming.

In the forehead of the his corpse was a single chopstick.

Being able to throw it so fast that the fourth Divine Sword didn't even have the time to dodge was impressive, but what was more impressive was that I was able to stick a chopstick into someone's forehead.

In the span of a single breath, the fight was already over and the three Divine Swords were now nothing more than corpses.

Then Yeom Hwa rose from his head and broke the table, “You!”

Then I got up from my table and emptied my glass of wine, “Is that fist of yours only used to scare women?”

He got even more fired up after my taunt, “Of course not!”

“Then you won't use them as hostages when we fight.” Then I stared at the two of them and they quickly left the restaurant.

The crowd started taking a couple of steps back, but no one was leaving since this was going to be a good fight that they didn't want to miss.

Yeom Hwa clenched his fist.

Wooooo!

Mist started to drift from his body and he expunged all the alcohol from his body. Since he was able to do this he was somewhat of an expert.

Then he asked me, "What is your purpose?"

"My purpose? I probably have a purpose, if not I wouldn't be doing this in the broad daylight."

"What is it?"

"Since you will die here you don't need to be worried about it."

"You punk!"

His killing intent filled the room.

I became a bit excited since he was someone who used the fist arts.

This was the first time that I would be facing a fist art master with my White Crane Arts.

Woosh!

With a loud noise, his fist came flying towards me. Just because it was a bare fist I couldn't lower my guard since I could be finished if I got hit directly with it. Seeing how much of an expert Yeom Hwa was, I expected him to be able to break boulders with his punches.

Wooosh! Boom!

Compared to his big build his attacks were very fast. Almost to the point where none of the crowd outside were able to see his movement. It just looked as if big boulders were moving.

Everything that his hands passed by turned into dust.

After dodging his attacks I finally put some of my ki into my fist and I attacked his oncoming fist.

Bang!

My fist collided with his fist.

I took a couple of steps back, and Yeom Hwa also took a couple of

steps.

The White Crane Art wasn't an art where you faced your enemy head on. It borrowed the energy and movement from the enemy to given them an even stronger critical blow.

However, I wanted to face him head on to see how much destructive force it had. An opportunity to fight someone like Yeom Hwa didn't come very often, so I had to maximize my time.

Bang!

Our fist collided in midair again.

My arm felt a little numb. Since Yeom Hwa focused on external techniques, his foundation was very solid. However that didn't mean that Yeom Hwa wasn't feeling any pain either. He was just holding it in.

I was able to fight evenly with Yeom Hwa due to my level of ki being higher than his so I used this opportunity to understand the White Crane Art better.

At first I believed that the White Crane Art was full of counters and hidden attacks, but the more I clashed with Yeom Hwa the more I felt the destructive nature of it.

I could tell that White Crane Art in itself wasn't a destructive art but the person who created it was destructive. Most likely the

creator found a different path later in his life and created a less destructive art, the White Crane Art. However, due to his innate nature of being destructive, there was some part of it which blended in.

‘So that’s how it was!’

Without being at the peak of the martial arts world, I would have never understood this.

After a couple more clashes I put some distance between the two of us.

Yeom Hwa was staring at me. He must have been really surprised since he hadn’t had a real fight like this in a long time. What must have surprised him even more, was how my fist was holding up to his.

In truth, my arms were trembling; thus, I put an end to my experiment.

“So, shall we get started for real?”

Yeom Hwa was surprised at what I said.

He thought I was saying this to throw him off, but the fact of the matter was that I was only experimenting up to this point.

Woosh!

I dodged his fist and closed the distance on him. My movement was sharper and cleaner.

Smack!

I punted his chest with my shoulder. Although I moved fast, the real reason why he didn't dodge it was because of his big build.

If it was another expert their chest would have broken, but he acted as if he was fine.

“Not a chance!”

He threw two more fists, but I easily dodged and aimed for his armpit on his third attack

Shiing!

His attack barely missed my forehead.

Since he used such a big attack I used this opportunity to attack him.

Smack!

My elbow found its mark on his armpit, then I didn't miss the opportunity to kick him.

Crack!

His shoulder dislocated.

“Uaahh!”

This was the first time that he screamed.

Smack! Punch!

I attacked at his vitals, and he rushed to attack me like a wild animal.

However his rage and anger were futile.

Whoosh!

I wrapped my leg around his and did a flip.

Craacck!

There was the sound of his arm breaking, but it didn't twist all the way.

“Ummphh!”

I used all of my strength.

Crack!

His arm then broke all the way.

“Uahhhh!”

With this momentum, I wrapped my leg around his head and turned.

Although his body was airborne he was a stubborn one and didn't die.

He got right back up and charged outside.

The people outside were panicking.

The person that he was looking for was Mae Rang and Ho Yeon Sook. Because he was overcome with fear and anger his instinct told him that he must make them his hostages.

Right as he was about to get near outside, he stopped moving.

His legs had stopped moving. It was because I used pressure points on his legs to immobilize them.

“What did I tell you? You are no better than a scarecrow. Look at what you are trying to do now.”

Everyone’s eyes were on him.

There were truly a lot of people present and they were all looking down on him

This was the worst point in his life. Since he was always the one looking down on them.

“Uaaahhh!” He screamed in his rage.

Then I got on top of his back and put both of my feet around his neck. With a great turn his head twisted like an owl.

Crack! Boom!

With a loud noise, he fell down. He died with his eyes wide open.

Many watchful eyes were on me now and I said in a loud voice, “The Mengju sent his successors from the Heavenly Dao Gate to build his influence and bring great disturbance to the Central Plains. This is my warning to them. If they look down on the Kang Ho, they will pay the price!”

I knew what they were feeling on the inside. Although they were silent since they didn't have any power they were cheering on the inside.

If the Heavenly Dao Gate hadn't taken over the Murim Alliance and if this wasn't Mu Han they would have cheered for me.

Then I said looking at Mae Rang, "She came here to find out about the death of her grandson.

But the Mengju didn't meet her. What sort of mengju is he? Is he the mengju for the people? Or is he the menjgu for the Heavenly Dao Gate? The reason why I spoke out is so that I can tell the Mengju as well as Heavenly Dao Gate that there are still people with a conscience in the Kang Ho.

That is all!"

Then Ho Yeon Sook asked me, "Will you tell me your honorable name, sir?"

I left after giving her a smile.

After jumping through the air and stepping on a couple of roof tiles and disappeared.

The reason why I appeared today was not because I wanted to

help the two of them.

From now on, I was going to become the Nameless Warrior who brought change to the Kang Ho.

This was the reason why I killed Yeom Hwa in broad daylight.

I felt that the people need a hero right now.

Byuk Lee Dan was going to slowly raise his strength while the Nameless Warrior was going to take a more active role now. This way the attention on Byuk Lee Dan would be diverted to the Nameless Warrior.

Then, when it is revealed that the Nameless Warrior was Byuk Lee Dan the whole Central Plain would be surprised.

Another reason why I showed myself today was because the people from the Organization, the Alliance as well as the Heavenly Dao Gate will start to use their resources to find out who this person is. But they will never be able to since I didn't exist.

With this, I became the light and the shadow. Sometimes I will use the light to deal with the darkness. Other times I will use an even greater shadow to get wipe out the darkness.

This was my first step against the enemies that I did not know.

Chapter 82: The Place The Hidden Message Led Me To (1)

Midget went back to the roof that Number Seven was at.

Then Number Seven asked, “How did it go?”

Midget shook his head side to side, “He got away.”

Number Seven was surprised. Although Midget was pretty small he was one of the stealthiest person that she knew.

Then she asked, “Did you let him go?”

She acted just as she was taught, always doubt everything.

“I know how you think of my skills but embarrassingly he is faster than I.”

“So he was a true master class expert.”

“He truly is a monster among master class experts.”

The two of them had watched the Nameless Warrior kill Yeom Hwa. What he used wasn't the Fist Art, nor the Grappling Art. It was something different.

“That was the first time I saw such a martial art.”

“Me too.”

“What should we do?” Although he had a higher ranking than her, the person who had the higher authority was Number Seven.

“We should make our report.”

“Alright.” And Midget disappeared from the roof.

Number Seven looked back at the restaurant. She didn’t know why but she was impressed by the Nameless Warrior.

‘It’s probably because his martial art was great.’

And she left too.

Mu Han was now bustling with stories about the Nameless Warrior.

Especially because it wasn’t an assassination as I killed Yeom Hwa, the Heavenly Dao Gate’s Decimator, in broad daylight, and as such everyone was even more surprised.

Many different places of Kang Ho were in high alert. Especially the Alliance. It was flipped upside down.

Sa Ma Chun immediately gathered all the advisors and held a meeting.

While Sa Ma Chun was furiously sitting at his chair he didn't know who he was dealing with. What sort of person this person was, why did he do such a thing, where was he from? All he knew was what he was called, "Lord Nameless Warrior".

"Who is this man?"

Then the Chief Advisor answered, "He is someone who just came out of the blue."

"Then you mean he just came down from the sky? Is that what you want me to report?"

Everyone had their heads lowered.

"Hurry up and find a clue! Right now!"

All the advisors left the room.

But Sa Ma Chun called Kal Sa Ryung, "Advisor Kal! Good timing. You should remain."

There was a cold atmosphere in the room.

“How are things going right now?”

“Bearable.”

“You have more grey hair than before.”

“It’s my age finally catching up to me.”

Kal Sa Ryang looked out the window and gave a sigh then he looked back at Si Gon and apologized, “I am sorry.”

He was still being abused by Sa Ma Chun as Sa Ma Chun gave him all sorts of difficult work. Due to this Kal Sa Ryang looked more tired than ever before but he wasn’t one to give up like this.

Looking at Kal Sa Ryung’s aging face, Sa Ma Chun lost interest in abusing him even further.

“Do you have anyone in mind who might be related to this event? There must be someone?”

When he first received the report he had thought that the person who killed Yeom Hwa was Baek Pyo.

Since he received the news that Baek Pyo closed down his shop he

was worried that he would cause something to happen, and then he received the news of Yeom Hwa's death.

But it was not Baek Pyo since he later received the news that this Nameless Warrior killed Yeom

Hwa barehanded.

Baek Pyo was someone who mastered the Sword Art. Never had he seen Baek Pyo use the First Art.

‘Who could it be?’

From his experience there was no way for an expert of this caliber to pop up out of nowhere. He was certain that it was someone famous who disguised themselves.

He carefully tossed out his opinion, “I believe it is someone from the Ho Yeon School.”

“And why do you say that?”

“In cases like this it is always related to the parties involved. Especially if it a big case like this.”

Sa Ma Chun nodded his head and kept listening to Kal Sa Ryung.

“Yeom Hwa revealed that he was going to eliminate all the disciples that were present on that day. And Yeom Hwa took Ho Yeon Tak’s grandmother and sister hostage.”

“Did such a thing happen?”

“Yes, I looked into it.”

Since this was a recent event even the True Heart Sect was scavenging for information. Everyone was focused on the death of Yeom Hwa and the Nameless Warrior and didn’t look deeper into the matter.

But Kal Sa Ryun was different, he never missed anything.

‘So you are different.’

Although he could get some rewards from Sa Ma Chun, showing too much would only make him doubt him even more. So he limited himself and only displayed part of his skills.

“This Nameless Warrior is probably someone sent from the Ho Yeon School or someone related to them.”

Sa Ma Chun nodded. This was enough evidence. He was going to go to the Mengju’s pavilion to give the report. It didn’t matter if it was the right answer or not, all he needed to do was please Ma Bong Gi.

Sa Ma Chun paused for a moment and thought that it was time to use Kal Sa Ryang's Resourcefulness.

"I will give you the full authority to handle this case."

"Chancellor."

"I am sure you are capable of getting to the bottom of this."

"Thank you, Thank you very much."

He was truly thankful. If he solved this case well he believed that Sa Ma Chun was going to lower his guard against him.

"I am sorry for all the trouble that I caused you."

"No, I will give it my all."

"I am trusting you."

Kal Sa Ryang left the room. As he was walking through the corridor, rather than there being tiredness or weariness, there was life and energy in his eyes.

'Nameless Warrior?'

Although he told Sa Ma Chun that this was related to the Ho Yeon School, he didn't believe that it was anyone related to the Ho Yeon School since he knew how the Ho Yeon School operated.

Kal Sa Ryang could feel it.

The change in Kang Ho had already started.

After I returned to the inn I reflected upon the battle with Yeom Hwa. I discovered some insight into the White Crane Art so I was meditating on it.

Thinking about the parts that I mastered, it was really amazing. Of course learning it was easy but fully understanding it was the true challenge. But since it is I, I didn't have to worry too much about it.

I was excited to see the true strength of it once I fully mastered it.

Can I fully merge the White Crane Art with my Ashura Soul Chasing Sword Art? And what sort of development will happen on my journey?

I was curious about what future had to offer me.

Then Kwang Du rushed to where I was standing.

“Young master? Have you heard the news?”

I asked him as if I didn't already know, “What news?”

“About Lord Nameless Warrior! How Lord Nameless Warrior took down Yeom Hwa in a single blow. Then he proclaimed to destroy the Heavenly Dao Gate's evil ways.”

I didn't say that I was going to destroy the Heavenly Dao Gate's evil ways?

But Kang Ho was like this. The rumors sometimes became unbelievable. But this was also a good thing since it will allow the news to travel far and wide.

“Amazing.”

“What sort of reaction is that?”

“What do you have to say about my reaction?”

“Can you be...”

Kwang Du looked at me. Since it was Kwang Du I was afraid he was going to discover it right away but...

“... You must be jealous.”

“Hahaha!”

“Don’t be like that. You are amazing the way you are and Lord Nameless Warrior is amazing the way Lord...”

“Lord?”

Kwang Du told me his true feelings, “He is so incredible”

“Do you know the difference between amazing and incredible?”

But Kwang Du was still praising the Nameless Warrior, “To get in front of everyone to defend someone, that is something that I dream of doing.”

I understood how he felt. Since he had only been introduced to this world recently. How could hearing words like this not amaze him?

But Kwang Du-Ya. You must know.

Although it may seem amazing to others, for those involved it is a completely different matter. It’s hard to imagine just how much fear and danger one had to go through and triumph over to reach that prowess.

“Oh yeah, I haven’t seen Warrior Baek in a while. And his restaurant is even closed. It says that he is doing maintenance on it.”

“He is on a mission.”

“Is it important?”

I nodded.

“Everyone is working so hard. Then I must not slack off either.”

“Then train hard, future Lord!”

“Haha, what do you mean future Lord, young master? I will always be your sword fodder young master.”

I smiled at Kwang Du as he walked away.

Then I went back to meditating.

Whether he became a Lord or my sword fodder, to become either you need strength. That’s the kind of world this Kang Ho is.

The gossip about the Nameless Warrior was more exuberant than

I expected. I knew that it was going to cause a wildfire when they gave me the title “Lord Nameless Warrior” but not to this degree.

And the people were now demanding the reinvestigation of the death of Ho Yeon Tak and the

Alliance had to finally give in. Ma Bong Gi ended up meeting with Mae Ryang and Ho Yeon Sook and told them that he would reinvestigate it.

Originally Ma Bong Gi wouldn't do something like this, but since the public sentiment was with them he had to give in. However, the real reason why he agreed was so that he could exact his revenge on the Ho Yeon School.

Tooth for tooth.

Yes, this was what I wanted. Go and beat each other up.

After hearing that the death of Ho Yeon Tak was being reinvestigated Mae Ryang and Ho Yeon

Sook were very happy.

Nevertheless, I felt sorry for them, as it won't come to light that easily. For a matter like this it probably was orchestrated by the Gaju so it wouldn't easily be uncovered.

Still, since the investigation had started, it gave them some hope.

Mae Ryang-Ah, don't worry. Your elder brother hasn't forgotten about you. When I have to opportunity I will get revenge for you.

At night Kong Soo Chan came to find me.

“The Solar Star Merchant Guild is doing well.”

Then he took out a book from his robe, “This is the book that you gave me that day.”

It was the book that I picked up from Ya Chun's storage.

“Since it is a code that is very similar to ours it didn't take long to decode it. And the content is mostly about transactions.”

Looking at the paper I saw some names that were related to the San Dong. It was those who were close to the Dark Guild. This will be a great help to me when I want to take over San Dong.

“There are some investments that Ya Chun did in some of the merchants in the Central Plain. And looking further into it he made quite an investment with other Dark Guilds.”

“So there is something that keeps the Dark Guilds connected?”

“Yes, from what I can gather there is something that connects them. If you allow me, I will try to dig further into it.”

“It must never get back to us.”

“Don’t worry sir. There are more than one organization that are investing. But I will never get too greedy.”

“But how will you go about doing it? Ya Chun is already dead.”

“There were always a group of people who were with Ya Chun when he made these investments. I will try to use them.”

“Alright, I’ll leave it in your care then.”

“Yes. If all goes well, it might give us some revenue.”

“Please take care.”

Before he left I said, “Ah, can you look at this as well?”

It was something that I found on Jo Byuk’s neck. Seeing that Kong Soo Chan was able to decode the book I thought he was more than capable of doing such a thing.

So I gave it to him and said, “Can you decode this?”

After looking at it for some time he shook his head, “It a very complicated code. I wouldn’t be able to decode it with my skill. But I know someone who can.”

“Who?”

“My teacher.”

I was surprised. Elder Jong? That stinking old man could decode something this difficult?

Kong Soo Chan added with a smile, “If it’s my teacher, I know he can decode this.”

Chapter 83: The Place That The Hidden Message Led Me To (2)

I headed straight home. Since everyone was busy with their own tasks, it wouldn't matter if I left Mu Han alone for a bit.

I got the feeling that I needed to get to the bottom of this as soon as possible, thus I decided to go straight to Elder Jong right after meeting my parents.

“What is it?” Elder Jong asked when I laid a couple of gifts in front of him.

“Just some good medicine. And these are some new clothes for you, so that you'll have some to wear in the spring.”

“Why are you giving me these things?”

“Why? They're my gifts to you.”

“Gifts?”

“They're gifts of gratitude for you giving me your wonderful disciple.”

Elder Jong laughed. “Ha! Stop trying to impress me. Get to the point.”

“So you really know how to read someone.”

He looked down at the gifts and replied, “You were extremely obvious with these.”

“Hahaha.” I gave him a piece of paper with the encoded text written on it.

“Please decode this for me.”

After looking at the paper Elder Jong replied, “This looks pretty challenging.”

In other words, it excited him to solve such a thing.

Kong Soo Chan had said that he’d learned how to decode things from his master. Originally, Elder Jong had wanted to become a scholar, but somehow, he’d ended up becoming our financial manager. One day, I wanted to hear his story.

“Come back after dinner.”

“That early? Really....”

“Make sure to bring a bottle of wine with you.”

“I will.”

He then asked me, “How is he?”

Although he was cold and stiff, he was still a caring master.

“He’s doing well.”

“Alright.”

I left Elder Jong’s room.

These days, Song Hwa Rin was training from sunrise to sunset.

She’d even told her father that she was going to temporarily stop learning the family business so that she could focus on her training.

Which martial artist family wouldn’t allow this? Song Woo Kyung had allowed her to focus on training right away.

After that, she’d begun training the martial art that I’d taught her.

Although she was still only at practicing the basic steps, she was

able to feel how profound and different this martial art was. The more she practiced it, the more she liked it.

She jumped from the floor and swung her sword.

Shing!

Her movement was fast yet precise; gentle yet firm.

Even though she'd only been practicing for a short time, it looked as if she'd been practicing for a long time. This sword art was a high-level sword art, yet she'd been able to assimilate it rather quickly because I'd taught it to her.

If someone else had taught it to her, it would have taken her years to reach where she was now.

‘Really, he’s...’

She didn’t understand him. She became confused whenever she thought about him. When she turned around, she screamed in surprise.

“Ahh!”

The person who was standing behind her was exactly the person she'd been thinking about, Byuk Lee Dan. She was even more surprised because it was me.

“Sorry. I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“No, it’s fine. However, why are you here?”

“Because I need to do something at home. I must return as soon as possible.”

“Oh.”

“However, I have until dinner-”

Before I was able to finished she cut me off and said, “Wait for me, I’ll go change.”

“Alright.”

She quickly left the practice ground. After she was out of my sight, she sped up her steps as she rushed to her room. She had so many things left that she had to do. She needed to take a bath, put on good clothing, and put on makeup.

Half an hour later, two people were walking down the street together.

Some of the passersby stopped to stare at her; they were jealous of me when they saw Song Hwa Rin. However, I didn’t feel bad at all. Rather, I was enjoying the attention. I enjoyed their jealous

glances at me and her.

Today was a good day to go out on a stroll. The skies were clear, and the birds were chirping.

It seems that winter is over, and that spring is on its way.

“How is Mu Han?”

“Way more complicated than this place. There are tons more people.”

“There must be a lot of girls prettier than me.”

“Probably. Yeah. What?”

Surprised at her attack, I turned around.

She continued on as if she was agreeing with me, “Yeah, there are probably many girls who’re prettier than me, considering the fact that it’s such a big city.”

“Someone prettier than you...”

Seeing her act like this made me want to tease her. There was no one I knew who was prettier than her.

“There are a few here and there.”

She instantly began to pout.

“Hahaha.”

Knowing that I was only teasing her, she laughed along with me. This was the first time that she'd looked jealous in front of me. She seems to shows me a new side of her every time I meet her.

We reached the end of the street while talking about various things.

“Where should we go now?”

“I don't know?”

This was the first time that I realized that I'd gone on a date like this with a beauty.

“We should walk around a bit more.”

“Sounds good.”

We walked back the way we'd come. And when we reached the other end, we went back again.

Going back and forth like this wasn't boring since we didn't have a destination in mind.

By the time I'd finished spending time with Song Hwa Rin and come home, Elder Jong had already finished decoding the message.

"I've decoded it." He said as he handed me the piece of paper.

Ha Nam Castle, Bang Sung, Chu Manor, any time, any month.

"Any time, any month... wouldn't that mean any time this month?"

"It's going to occur exactly eight days from now."

So eight days from now, there was going to be some sort of meeting at the Chu Manor, which was located inside Bang Sung, near Ha Man Castle.

If it was somewhere near Ha Nam Castle, I could make it in time.

"Thank you for helping me."

"What do you mean? But with this... could it be that... you're doing something dangerous?"

"Who knows."

There was some worry present on his face. However, he didn't express it and simply took the wine.

“Next time don't take so long.”

“Hahaha, it's a bit late. You're getting old.”

“You rascal.”

The next day, I said my farewells and left.

The place I was headed for was Ha Nam Castle.

When I arrived at Bang Sung, I asked around for the location of the Chu Manor, and discovered that it was located to the west.

With a different face, as well as different clothing, I headed to the Chu Manor. I put on a straw hat as well. Although most wouldn't be able to force my hand, I put it on just in case. I didn't know what I would be dealing with.

I saw more and more people as I neared the manor. There were both martial artists and non-martial artists. I sensed that these martial artists were pretty seasoned, and saw that these non-martial artists had pretty good clothing on.

There were even merchants with guards who had gifts on-hand.

I decided to ask someone what was going on. “Where’s everyone going?”

“Today is Lord Chu’s birthday.”

Lord Chu’s birthday....

Birthdays are a good opportunity to hold meetings, as they won’t be suspected as much despite so many people being present.

“Where are you from?”

One of the receptionists asked me. I answered him by simply saying the name of the person that I’d killed, Jo Byuk. As the man wrote my name down, he looked at me with a strange look, but he couldn’t see what I looked because of my straw hat.

Despite that, I was able to enter as if nothing happened.

The banquet hall was full of people who were there to congratulate the lord. They were all chattering with each other while drinking wine and eating. I stood to the side and observed the room.

Why had Jo Byuk kept this secret letter?

After the banquet hall filled up, Lord Chu entered the room and welcomed everyone.

“You didn’t have to come to this old man’s birthday.”

Afterwhich, someone from the crowd replied, “Of course we need to be here for the Lord of Bang Sung’s birthday.”

“What if someone else heard this?”

“To us, you’re the big lord.”

Everyone else in the room agreed with the speaker.

“Of course.”

“Yes.”

“Congratulations.”

“Happy birthday.”

The crowd was cheering for him.

“Thank you. Thank you all for coming to this old man’s birthday

banquet. Because of all of you being here, I wouldn't regret it even if I died tomorrow. Please enjoy the food and drinks, and have fun. Thank you all for coming a long way just for me."

The crowd cheered again.

"My Lord, you must live to be over hundred."

So far, it had just been a normal birthday banquet.

But something abnormal occurred with the appearance of two maids who approached me. "You are Lord Jo?"

"Yes."

They must've been keeping an eye on me from the moment I'd given my name to the receptionist.

"Please follow us." The maids led me away. Since there were so many people, most of them simply ignored us.

There was a single expert guarding the front of the building. From what I could see, he was someone on the same level as Yeom Hwa.

Why would such an expert be at a place like this?

I followed the maids inside the building. There were two others who'd arrived before me. It seems that they'd been invited here as well.

One of them was in their twenties, while the other was in his thirties. It seems that they both have a decent amount of skill.

Why had we arrived at such a place?

The door in front to the front of the building opened, and ten or so people entered. The person who was on the lead was the expert who'd been guarding the building, while the people who'd come with him seemed like they were also experts.

If the expert guarding the door was similar in power to Yeom Hwa, then these expert's were at least at the level of the Divine Swords.

One Yeom Hwa and ten Divine Swords. This was certainly a rare sight.

The man proceeded to introduce himself. "I am Sim Hwang."

He didn't mention whether he was an expert from inside or from outside.

"Before we get started, I will verify the invitation."

Invitation?

I didn't know what he invitation he wanted to verify, since I didn't have a invitation.

Luckily Sim Hwang took out a small piece of paper. I knew what it was at first glance.

It was the letter that Jo Byuk had had. So the invitation was that piece of paper.

So that was the reason that Jo Byuk had kept the paper.

Afterwards, Sim Hwang set the paper inside a dish full of water, which in turn turned blue. It was probably smeared with a special chemical that allowed them to verify the paper.

When it was my turn, I dipped my paper into the water. When it turned blue as well, I returned, feeling relieved.

But as I was walking back-

Shiing!

Someone slashed at me with their sword, and I barely managed to dodge it.

Sim Hwang stared at me, his eyes cold. “You are not Jo Byuk.”

All the experts around me drew their weapons and surrounded me.

I replied in a cold voice, “You really don’t know the meaning of an invitation card. If you were already going to do something like this, there was no need for us to take out our invitation cards.”

Chapter 84: The Place That The Hidden Message Led Me To (3)

I wasn't nervous at all, despite there being a sword pointed at me.

I didn't look at the blade, but directly looked into Sim Hwang's eyes.

At that point, someone entered the room and said, "You're right. An invitation card is used to invite people."

It was the lord of the Chu manor, Chu Do Chi. Although he'd shown his warmth and compassion in front of all those people, in this room he was showing off his coldness and sharpness. It was as if his evil twin had shown up.

"Take off your hat."

"I don't want to."

Sim Hwang flinched at what I said. He looked as if he wanted to killed me right now, but couldn't due to lord Chu's arrival.

He proceeded to warn me with a cold look in his eyes, "You should watch out. I'm the type of person who only gives one warning, and you used that warning when I drew my sword."

However, Chu Do Chi stopped him. "Stand down."

Sim Hwang withdrew his sword, but he still seemed to have his suspicions about me.

Afterwards, Chu Do Chi proceeded to give me a warning as well, “You should be careful. You only have one chance.”

I could only smile. Who would have thought that such a situation would be awaiting me at the place that the hidden message had led me to.

“You still don’t want to show me your face? It’s not like you’re a pretty boy. You think too much of yourself.”

“It’s not like you’re hunting a pig.”

Chu Do Chi started laughing and said, “Hahaha. I guess you’re right. Alright, since you have the skills to decode the message on the invitation card, you’re already qualified. However, the original owner of that invitation card is already dead. How do you have it?”

“Because I was the one that killed him.”

“Interesting. Then who might you be?”

“Just think of me as someone who couldn’t stand the kidnapping of young girls.”

Chu Do Chi looked at me with a pair of cold eyes, but he didn't say anything, as I was hiding my ki.

“After I killed Jo Byuk, I found this invitation card by luck, and it brought me here. Now then, let me ask you a question. What is this place?”

Chu Do Chi smiled. “As you've seen, we have many guests today since it's my birthday. But you're one of my special guests.”

“Pray tell.”

“I sent out invitations to those who shared the same ideals as me. I told them not to come if they didn't want to. Those that are here share the same ideals as I do. Although you might have come here due to your curiosity, I have a feeling that it was the work of fate.

“How many people received this invitation?”

“Why do you ask?”

“Will you tell me how many people you invited?”

After a moment, Chu Do Chi answered, “Seven in total.”

“I'm worried about the four that aren't present.”

Chu Do Chi smiled at my comment as if he'd expected this response from me.

“If you're worried, why don't you consider yourself lucky that you're still alive?”

He said this both as an assurance, as well as a warning.

“I plan to change this Kang Ho.”

“How?”

“To a Peaceful Kang Ho. To an uncorrupt Kang Ho. Thus, I'm gathering people. Not some Kang Ho ruled by the Old, but to a new Kang Ho ruled by people like you.”

I smiled.

“Why are you smiling?”

“You want to make a Kang Ho that isn't ruled by the old, yet you don't seem too young yourself.”

Chu Do Chi stared at me, but didn't show his true intention.
“That's why I invited you.”

“Let's talk for real. You want to rule the Kang Ho?”

“If you follow the lord, you’ll naturally come to understand his wish.”

“Let’s say that I come to understand your wish. What do I get out of it in the end?”

“Power.”

Receiving Chu Do Chi’s signal, one of his subordinates brought three boxes over.

There was a pill inside of each box.

“A Great Firmament Pill. You’d be able to receive thirty years of internal energy with this.”

The other two’s eyes twitched.

In times like these, where medicines such as these were rare, obtaining such medicine was definitely a blessing.

But that wasn’t all.

“I also want to gift you a high tier martial arts.”

Chu Do Chi said to the other two, “If you can kill him, you can

also get his Great Firmament Pill.”

This was a world where the strongest survived. With two Great Firmament Pills, one could obtain sixty years worth of internal energy.

However, the two of them were a bit hesitant since they didn't know my true skill. Seeing that I was talking to Chu Do Chi like it was nothing had gotten on their mind.

In the end, however, this was too great of a chance for them to give up.

One of the two moved and aimed his sword at my chest.

I easily dodged it, grabbed his wrist, and pulled him towards me. When his body got close to mine-

Sik!

I inserted a hidden weapon into his throat.

“Uaahhh!”

He collapsed after screaming.

The other man instantly said, “I'll be content with just my own.”

The other man walked towards one of the chests and grabbed a Great Firmament Pill.

I looked at him and said, “Are you sure that that’s really the Great Firmament Pill?”

He became hesitant.

“Think about it. If you had the choice to rule the Kang Ho, but in the middle of the room are a couple of Great Firmament Pills, would you choose to eat it to raise your cultivation or would you watch others eat them?”

The man looked at me with a cautious expression.

Shiing!

The man suddenly fell down.

Chu Do Chi held a blade that was dripping with blood.

It seems like he’s an expert who’s a level above Sim Hwang.

“You’ve ruined today’s business. Kill him.”

As if he was waiting, Sim Hwang and his men released their

killing intent.

Shing!

I threw a hidden weapon at him. However, Sim Hwang dodged easily.

But my true aim wasn't to kill him.

Right after I threw, it I ran towards him

Sim Hwang quickly slashed at me with his sword.

Shing! Shing! Shing! Shing! Shing!

He swung five times in a blink of an eye, all of which only hit air.

I dodged and attacked his men; that was my original intent. The reason that I'd thrown a hidden weapon was to divert their attention away from me for a moment.

Smack!

The first man fell down to the floor. I didn't know what sort of reaction they'd have when I took down one of them, so I immediately jumped towards the next one.

Smack!

I smacked the next person in the jaw. It shattered, and I proceeded to use him as a shield.

Shing!

The men behind him slashed towards us with his sword. However, he was hesitant about harming his ally, thus I was able to easily dodge his attack. I used my human shield to propel myself forward and attack him.

Smack!

When I reached him, I kneed him in the face, causing him to collapse to the floor.

When I looked towards my next target, Sim Hwang yelled, “Watch out, he’s an expert!”

I was more of an expert than they’d expected, but they still didn’t know what I was capable of.

Why would one be called an expert if others could simply be prepared for them as simply as this?

I was like a wolf in the middle of a herd of sheep.

Usually it would be best if you took out the leader first.

However, in situations like this, killing the leader first wasn't for the best.

I was going to kill all of the subordinates first, then fight the leader.

Smack!

I smacked the next man, then threw him by the hair into another person. After I threw him, I kicked the nearest person.

Shing!

A sword light flew in my direction. It had been created by Sim Hwang.

I dodged by throwing myself to the floor. The sword light hit the person behind me, bisecting him.

As I was falling down, I changed my direction.

Shing!

I threw a hidden weapon towards the man in front of me, which found its mark and caused the man to collapse.

Smack!

As soon as he began to collapse, I kicked his head, causing him to fly towards the men behind him.

Another sword light flew towards my direction.

Shing!

I pulled another person in front of me and held him there until the last second, when I dodged; the person I'd used as a shield was bisected.

Sim Hwang cursed as I took down another person.

I continued to take down the remaining men with my hidden weapons.

Since they weren't able to dodge them, they all ended up dead. If it had been a normal situation, they should've been able to dodge them with ease, but they couldn't since because of their tenseness.

I used the moment that they'd least expected to attack them. This was the most efficient way use a hidden weapon.

Like this I was able wipe out all of his subordinates.

“You punk! I’ll kill you!”

Sim Hwang charged at me with his sword. He was worthy of being called an expert.

His sword was extremely fast, and was aimed at my vitals. He was doing his best, since he knew that he was facing another expert.

Slash! Shing! Slash! Shing!

No matter how angry a hunting dog gets, it can never take down a tiger.

I broke through his defense easily, and attacked him.

By the time he’d realized what happened, my fist had reached his ribs.

He looked at me with a surprised expression. He never thought that I’d be able to strike him down this easily, but his expression became one of acceptance. If you can’t accept that your next moment could be your last, you shouldn’t ever enter the Kang Ho.

Bang!

Sim Hwang was dead by the time his body hit the floor.

I looked up at the last person in the room, Chu Do Chi.

He seemed confident in his abilities, considering the fact that he hadn't made a run for it.

I was curious to know if he was the ringleader, or if there was someone else behind him. If there was someone else, it would probably be related to that group.

"In the world of Kang Ho experts are as abundant as sand beneath the ocean. However, someone like you, I've never... ah."

He seemed to have suddenly been enlightened.

"...I have heard about you. The Nameless Warrior who killed Yeom Hwa barehanded. So that's who you were."

I didn't say anything or do anything, but he was certain that that's who I was.

"I should've sent you a special invitation—one that was just for you."

I slowly walked forward and grabbed the Great Firmament Pill, then smelled it. Although it smelled like the Great Firmament Pill, it wasn't exactly the same. I'd used the Great Firmament Pill many times when I was the mengju.

Although it had some traces of the Great Firmament Pill, it was something else.

The Devil's Spirit Pill of No Regret.

It was a medicine that indeed gave thirty years worth of internal energy.

But there was a price to pay for it: Absolute death after seven years. Thus it was called the devil's pill.

If you ate two you would gain sixty years worth of internal energy, but would only have three more years left to live, and if you took three you would gain ninety years worth of internal energy, but you would die after a year. Anything more than that was immediate death after consumption.

Since it was called the pill of no regret, the martial artists from the Demonic Sect had used it during their last struggles against me.

What was such an evil item doing here?

“How is it? I'm certain that you'll make the most of the medicine if you use it.”

“Have you used it before?”

He was hesitant. I got the feeling that he'd already used it. Did he know what this really was?

Who would have thought that there was an organization that had used the Devil's Spirit Pill of No Regret to create their organization.

"Well, it doesn't matter. Even if I don't give it to you, there are many others who are willing to take it." He said, and gave a signal.

Clank! Clank! Clank!

All the doors opened around the room opened to reveal hundreds of people surrounding the building.

I was surprised. They were the guests that he'd invited for his birthday.

These people were all looking at me. I could tell with a glance that they were all his subordinates.

Chu Do Chi said with a smile, "I told you that I only invited the people that shared the same dream as me."

So it this was a place like this. It seems like he'd purposely held the birthday party so that he could gather more members.

Their level of ki wasn't ordinary either. I could sense that there

were many who'd reached the sixty year point, while there were some who'd even reached the one hundred and twenty year point.

Looking around myself, I smiled coldly. "As if you wanted to create a new Kang Ho."

Chapter 85: At The End Of Where The Monster's Tail Lies (1)

People with several different levels of ki were surrounding the building. Some seemed weak, while others seemed strong.

Some of them even seemed to have an extremely large amount of ki—much more than I'd expected anyone to have when I first arrived. However, I could sense that this was all artificial, and that they would do anything when the order was given.

This was the first time in a while that I'd felt this tense.

It wasn't because they outnumbered me, nor was it because they were strong. It wouldn't be that hard to wipe them out either. It was because of the Devil's Spirit Pill of No Regret.

An item that I'd thought to be eradicated was now right before my eyes. And here they were, using it to build an army. Seeing that such an evil item has appeared, the situation is much worse than I expected.

Up to this point I'd been able to play with my opponents and test out my strength. However, now I needed to get serious.

From what I could tell, this was just the tail of this monster.

There was no way that Chu Do Chi had been able to get enough

Devil's Spirit Pill of No Regrets to raise this force with.

Was this just the tail? No, what if it wasn't the tail, but was just a single whisker?

"He must be scared."

I affirmed something when he spoke.

At first, I'd decided to get rid of them the moment I saw the Devil's Spirit Pill of No Regrets, since it truly was a dangerous item. I could get rid of them with the White Crane Art of King Shura.

However, I decided not to.

I needed to learn who their backers were.

Yes, I need to act scared so that they'd lower their guard. And when they lowered their guard, I'd be able to see their weakness.

"Hmph! Do I really look scared?" Although I said it in a loud voice, my voice trembled slightly.

I could approach them first, but if that didn't work I could always just kill them.

With a grim expression, I asked, “Can I eat this Great Firmament Pill?”

Because I had a Poison Immune Physique, the Devil’s Spirit Pill of No Regret would be useless against me, as it was created using poisons. Unfortunately, it also meant that I wouldn’t receive the energy within the pill.

Seeing that he had the upper hand, Chu Do Chi said, “You should’ve eaten it before you killed my subordinates.”

“I can do their share of work as well.”

“What?”

“Wouldn’t it help you if you were able to recruit an expert like me?”

“You’re a prideful one I see. Do you think that you’re skilled enough to make us beg you to work for us? Do you honestly think that we’re that weak?”

“If you weren’t that weak you wouldn’t be doing this, right? Alright, let’s speak truthfully. I can guarantee that to kill me, more than half of your subordinates will die. I can also guarantee that you’ll die.”

I didn’t get any response from him, as he knew how skilled I was from when I’d killed his subordinates.

“Let’s say that you kill me. What will you say to your superiors? That some crazy bastard had wiped out more than half of your men? Would your superior really like that?”

Since I was telling the truth, Chu Do Chi was silent.

“I honestly don’t want to die in a place like this.” I showed a sign of weakness.

Chu Do Chi made his decision after a moment. “Take off your hat.”

I took off my straw hat.

When I’d killed Yeom Hwa, I’d had a face alteration mask on. I’d decided from the start that I would use an ultimate tier face alteration mask whenever I took on the mantle “Nameless Warrior” so that no one would be able to figure out that I was wearing a face alteration mask.

Chu Do Chi looked down towards the Devil’s Spirit Pill of No Regret I was holding.

“Eat the Great Firmament Pill.”

“Alright.”

I ate the Devil's Spirit Pill of No Regret, then began to circulate my cultivation technique.

Wooo...

It looked like I was absorbing the energy from it, but no one was able to tell whether or not I was actually absorbing its energy.

When the Devil's Spirit Pill of No Regret had dissolved in my stomach, I smiled and said, "Oh! It really is the Great Firmament Pill. I really did gain thirty years of energy from it."

Chu Do Chi tossed the remaining two Devil's Spirit Pills towards me and said, "You should take these two as well."

"Are you serious? There's no reason for you to treat me so nicely." I made sure to sound suspicious when I spoke.

"Since things have become this way, make sure to serve me loyally."

After pretending to look at him suspiciously, I ate the other two.

I didn't know whether or not he'd taken these himself, but there was one thing I knew for sure: He knew that this was the Devil's Spirit Pill.

He was taking revenge on me for killing his subordinates by

making me eat three. He only wanted me to live a single year, as I wouldn't be of use to him if I lived too long.

And it was also a good excuse he could tell his superior. He could tell them that I'd eaten all three due to my greed, thus I could only be used for one year.

After pretending to absorb all three, he checked my ki level. After doing so, he believed that I'd gained ninety years of energy from the pills, as I had more than a hundred years worth of energy already.

Chu Do Chi said, "Don't try anything funny, those pills had some poison in them."

"Understood."

"You're not surprised?"

"I somewhat expected this. There was no way that you'd give me such a thing for free."

"Not bad. Follow me."

I followed him outside as the crowd made way for us.

I didn't lower my guard as I followed Chu Do Chi.

The speeding carriage came to a stop.

“Did you know that the people in the Kang Ho call you ‘Lord Nameless Warrior’?”

“I guess it somehow came to be. However, I don’t like being called ‘Lord’.”

“Why’s that?”

“Because I might not be able to live up to their expectations. I’m someone who doesn’t do anything that might be disadvantageous to me.”

“I’ve heard that you also threatened the Heavenly Dao Gate?”

“That was because I was in the moment and people were staring at me. I simply had a score to settle with the Decimator.”

“Hoho. So you’re a fake then.”

“Being called a fake is pretty harsh.”

Chu Do Chi grinned.

I continued, “Isn’t the difference between being known as a ‘righteous lord’ and being called one a minute difference? If I say such things I might be a righteous lord, but if I do said things then I’m not.”

I was saying things like this so that I’d lower his suspicion of me. I’d spoken as if I didn’t respect righteous people, but I do. Although I’m not a righteous person, I try my best to live like one.

A righteous lord is someone who never does things for his own benefit. He’ll go so far as to sacrifice himself, just so that he can help another. That was why it was much harder to become a righteous lord than an expert.

The place that we arrived at was somewhere north of Bang Sung, in a place called Jung Ju.

When we entered Jung Ju, Chu Do Chi placed a piece of wool over my eyes.

When he did, I used all of my senses to memorize where the carriage was going: How fast we were moving, when we made a turn, even the feeling of the road. I even memorized the sounds around us as we moved.

I heard a door open, followed by the carriage coming to a halt. We’d entered some sort of building.

“Get off.”

With my eyes still covered, I followed Chu Do Chi.

At some point, we stopped in an area, which then began moving downwards. It seems that it's some sort of pulley.

Wooong!

I could tell that it had been created by a master craftsman, as there was hardly any movement as we descended.

We came to a stop after descending for quite a while.

This time, we walked through a long corridor, but I could feel the presence of something. It wasn't a person's presence, but the movements of more pulley systems.

There were... one, two, three, four. A total of four pulley systems were installed here.

The only reason I could tell was because there had been several pulleys in the Mengju's pavilion.

After a while, we entered another corridor that didn't seem to have any pulleys. However, this time I sensed the presence of people.

Experts!

There were experts on both sides of the corridor. I didn't know what their skills were, but I could tell that they were just as strong as Sim Hwang. There were eighteen of them present.

But that wasn't it. I could also sense a large amount of ki coming from a corridor to the left. If it was coming from a person, then that person was a supreme expert.

I also felt a weird presence from a room close to that one. Although it wasn't as strong as the first, it was exceptionally cold.

What are these people doing?

Who would've thought that these things would await me when I followed Chu Do Chi.

After that, we entered a room and he took off my blindfold. Since the room was pretty dark, I was able to regain my sight pretty quickly.

There was someone sitting in a chair in front of me.

Looking closely, I was able to see that it was a naked man.

This was the first time that I'd seen this man, but I knew that he

wasn't the person I was here to see.

His eyes were full of fear.

After a moment, he began panting and lost control of his breath.

When I looked towards Chu Do Chi, I saw that he was just watching the scene.

The man started turning red, then began to shake and scream.

He looked extremely miserable. I could tell that he was participating in some sort of experiment, but I wasn't in a situation where I could help him.

Who was tormenting him like this?

After a minute or so, he stopped moving as blood started to pour out of all seven of his orifices.

When he died, the room lit up. I could tell that the creator of this place had a significant amount of funding.

A man in his thirties entered through a door that was different than the one I'd entered. He had a skinny physique and an ordinary look. Something seemed suspicious, as there was no way a person that looked as ordinary as him would be in a place like this.

The man didn't even look at us as he went and examined the corpse. He didn't seem to mind getting blood on his hands and clothing.

"Failure again." He mumbled.

He waved his hand for me to come forward, and Chu Do Chi gave me the go ahead look.

I approached him slowly, releasing an appropriate amount of ki in an attempt to read his ki.

I was able to observe his cultivation level, as his martial art wasn't strong. However, he had a different sensation than most others.

"How is it?"

"What do you mean?"

"How does this corpse make you feel."

Very brutal.

"I don't feel anything from it."

“Interesting. Then how about me?” He paused.

I was certain that the person in front of me was the man who’d given Chu Do Chi his orders, but who was he?

“I want to beat you up.”

As soon as I said this, Chu Do Chi yelled from behind, “Watch what you say!”

However, the man didn’t seem angry. Rather, he seemed to have taken a deeper interest in me.

“Definitely a crazy person.”

“I’m not crazy.”

“I heard that you ate three Devil’s Spirit Pill of No Regret all by yourself. You’re definitely crazy.”

“Devil’s Spirit Pill of No Regret?” I asked, as if I didn’t know what it was. I was pretty surprised that he’d personally said the name.

“Now you only have one year of life left.”

I widened my eye like I was surprised. Half of it was an act, while

the other half was for real. Why would he tell me such a secret?

“You can only live for seven years after eating one Devil’s Spirit Pill of No Regret, with two you can only live three, and with three you’ll only have a single year left.”

I stared at Chu Do Chi, “Is this true?”

He nodded.

I continued, “Before I die, I’ll definitely kill you.”

My killing intent was so strong that it made Chu Do Chi retreat a couple of steps.

Then the man said, “But I have an antidote for it.”

I turned my head back towards the man and said, “Are you for real?”

“How about it? Do you want to live?”

“Of course I want to live.”

I knew that this man was a master of manipulation. He’d told me everything truthfully—except for one thing. There was no antidote for the Devil’s Spirit Pill.

If there was one, Kang Ho would've been in the hand of the Demon Sect already.

If it had been someone else, they would've believed his words, as this was a place that did all sort of experiments. Especially someone who'd just been told that they had only a few more years to live.

You can fool everyone else, but you can never fool me.

Alright, if you want to do it this way, then I'll dance to the tone of your music.

I'll find out how you make the Devil's Spirit Pill, and who your backer is.

“What must I do to live?”

“Simply do as I say.”

“Then let me say this: I don't kill unless they are a person of evil.”

“There are many evil people that I must kill.”

“Who are you?”

He smiled and revealed his name, “I am called Ma Ryung In.”

Who would’ve thought that I would meet one of the Heavenly Dao Gate’s successors here?

Why is he here?

He was much different than the person I’d heard of in the rumors. He seems much more cynical than what I’ve heard of.

With this I, sensed that I’d finally caught the tail of the monster.

Chapter 86: At The End Of Where The Monster's Tail Lies (2)

As always, Number One was gazing at a painting on the wall.

The person currently reporting to him was Number Seven. "Someone known as 'Lord Nameless Warrior' killed Yeom Hwa."

Number One turned around and asked, "Did you see the fight with your own eyes?"

"Yes."

"How was it?"

"He used a martial art that I've never seen before."

"How was he compared to you?"

"He's out of my league."

"What about the Midget?"

This was a meaningless question, as assassins had many ways to deal with opponents that were stronger than them. Since the Midget was a top-tier assassin, this question was even more meaningless.

However, Number Seven was still very hesitant. "...I don't have the ability to determine that."

"So he's that strong?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"We don't know anything about him."

"So an expert like him simply fell down from the sky, killed Yeom Hwa, and disappeared?"

"Yes."

"So you're saying that this was a coincidence, and that he doesn't know about us?"

"That's what I believe, as he didn't detect us."

"Of course. He shouldn't have suspected anything."

Number One lightly tapped on the table with his finger. This was a habit of his that appeared when he was thinking about something.

"Kang Ho has been too quiet for too long. I guess it's time that these people began showing up. Number Seven."

"Yes."

"I'll leave this 'Lord Nameless Warrior' in your hands. Find out who he is, what he does, what he wants, everything and anything. We need to know everything about him."

"Understood."

As soon as Number Seven had finished replying, another man entered to room and gave a report, "We've found the location of 'Lord Nameless Warrior'."

"What?"

"He's in Jung Joo."

"Jung Joo?"

"He's with Ma Ryung In. Number Two sent us a report that the nameless warrior had made contact with Ma Ryun In at Jung Joo."

Ma Chul Goon was being observed by Number Three, while Ma Ryung In was being observed by Number Two.

"Alright."

After giving the report, the man left the room.

"First he got involved in your case, now he's involved with Number Two? This can't be a coincidence. This man... this is very suspicious."

His tapping became faster, then stopped.

"Number Seven, go and get me a status report."

"If I get involved, Number Two won't like it."

"Probably."

Number one looked at Number Seven. Number Seven simply nodded her head, as she couldn't disobey her orders because of a petty reason like this.

"I'm sorry. I'll leave right away."

"Take the midget and the drunk with you."

The Drunk was also one of the top four assassins in the organization.

"Take even the Drunk with me?"

"You told me that he was strong, right? If you need to, eliminate him immediately. Disregard what Number Two thinks, I'll trust your decision."

"Understood."

Number Seven left the room.

After she'd left, Number One got up from his seat.

He walked back to the painting and began staring at it once again.

Then he mumbled to himself, "Don't die. If you die... only the dead will mourn."

No one knew who he was implying when he said this.

I had dinner with Ma Ryun In.

It was an extremely fancy dinner, such that I wondered how he was able to have such a fancy meal down here.

Since I'd eaten three Devil Spirit Pill, I only had a single year left in their eyes. But for him to have a meal with me like this, it means that he must need me to do something.

What does he want me to do?

"Do you really have an antidote for the Devil Spirit Pill?"

Ma Ryun In slammed his chopsticks down on the table. "Didn't I tell you? I have the antidote. I hate it when men start nagging me."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be in a rush. I'll give it to you when the time is right."

It would be difficult to ask a second time since he'd shown his anger like this.

He truly was a master of manipulation.

"I have something I'd like to ask."

"What is it?"

"Why did you kill that man yesterday? It seemed like you were doing some sort of experiment on him."

He stared coldly at me. "I didn't show it to you so that you could ask me questions about it."

Then he started laughing. "Do you know why I didn't send you off right away, and why we are instead having a meal like this?"

"How should I know?"

"That's it."

"Say it in words that I understand."

"That's exactly it. You're ignorant."

"Interesting. You like me because I'm ignorant. I think that, if everyone was like you, they could become the Murim Mengju."

"Haha..."

I began eating again. I was currently eating everything without hesitation. This was one of the benefits of having the Poison Immune Physique: I could eat everything and anything I wanted.

"I'm looking for an ingredient."

I stopped eating again. "What ingredient?"

"Shall we see what sort of ingredient?"

"Alright. After we finish eating."

I began eating again. Even though I did want to know his secrets, if I appeared to be too interested in them, it might arouse his suspicion.

If he wanted to show me, he would. If he didn't, he wouldn't.

Ma Ryung In grinned. "What's so good about the food that you eat every day."

"It's because it's food that we eat every day that I enjoy it."

"Hahaha."

After we'd finished eating, Ma Ryun led me to a room.

I followed him through a corridor. Even though I didn't seem to look too interested, I paid close attention to every detail as we walked.

The place that we came out of was about ten paces away from the room that I'd first met him in. It seems that there aren't any weird hidden contraptions in this corridor.

After we exited of the room, we arrived in the corridor that Chu Do Chi had shown me. I still felt the eighteen experts.

Then he took me to the room that I'd felt a weird feeling from.

Clank!

The room opened and we entered.

"We can't allow an outsider inside."

Behind the door stood a single man.

As soon as I saw him, I immediately recognized him. Especially his eyes.

They were the same as Number Seven's.

He was someone from 'the organization'. So they'd sent someone to every single successor. This must mean that they're part of something greater.

Does this mean that Ma Bong Gi is related to it? Or is he not? I've got lots of questions.

Ma Ryung In smiled and said, "This won't do."

"Why aren't you asking me about how I feel about him?"

"How is it?"

"I want to beat him up more than you."

"Hahaha. You should take things slowly. If you see everything in a single day, it won't be fun."

"That's true."

Clank

He closed the door.

I followed Ma Bong Gi around to the other two rooms.

One had a strong Ki inside of it, while the other had a mysterious sensation.

But whatever they were doing, it was inside of those rooms.

I left the place blindfolded again, and the carriage started

moving.

This time, I also tried my best to remember where the place was.

It would've been easier if the carriage had left towards Bang Jung again, but it didn't.

After riding for awhile, we stopped at an inn.

"Wait for your orders here."

"Inside the inn?"

"Yes."

"Shit! Aren't you ignoring me too much? You should've rented out a place for me."

"Didn't I tell you before? You're nothing. And you'll do as you're told."

"Hmph! I'll never forget the fact that you fed me three poison pills."

"If you keep on acting like this, you'll lose your life."

Although he'd checked and seen that I had almost a hundred and

twenty years' worth of energy, Chu Do Chi wasn't afraid of me. He was just like his subordinates; he wasn't afraid of death.

"Didn't you get ninety years worth of internal energy with my help? And didn't I take you to see Lord Ma? I don't have any intention of killing you."

This person lies, that person lies... Kang Ho is full of liars.

"Are you telling the truth?"

"I swear."

If he wants to trick me this much, I guess I'll just have to be fooled by him.

"How long do I need to wait for?"

"Until you receive orders."

"Fine. But I won't stay in an inn. I don't like being stuck in a place like this. If you're going to give me an order, give it to me in the morning.

"If I can."

As he began to leave I warned him, "Don't you dare try to spy on

me. When I find someone trying to spy on me, I'll immediately kill that person without hesitation. I've warned you."

He mumbled, "Truly an arrogant punk. Let's see how important you really are. Let's see how you live the last year of your life."

I went into the inn that he'd rented me a room in and told the owner, "I'm going to sleep, don't bother me."

"Yes sir."

When I went up to the room, I used my energy to scan the room. Luckily, there was no one observing me.

Thus, I immediately jumped out of the window and began tailing Chu Do Chi. He'd never expect me to trail him.

It was probably because I'd warned him that I'd kill anyone who tried to spy on me. As such, he was simply heading directly to wherever he was headed.

The place that he entered was the Jung Ju Martial Art School.

The person who welcomed him treated him respectfully. With this, I knew that this was another one of their offices. I was able to sense that the person who'd opened the door was a hidden expert.

After leaving the place, I rented a carriage.

When I entered the back of the cage, I said to the driver, "Please head in the direction that I'm about to tell you. But please understand, it's been awhile since I've been there."

"Try to remember it slowly."

That wasn't going to work if I wanted to use what was in my memory.

I recalled what had happened that day. However it was difficult, as it had been a different time of day, thus the noise had also been different. The carriage had also felt different.

But since my memory was better than ever, with a little concentration I was able to recall everything.

After a few tries, I finally found the place that I was looking for. It was a small manor located some distance away from the city.

I'm sure that they'd never expect me to find this place as soon as they'd released me. This was the most important part in taking down your enemy.

The old manor didn't even have a sign put up, proving that it was a pretty old manor.

I wasn't in any rush to enter the place. There were many experts

that made me hesitant to enter, as well as the fact that all the traps and contraptions inside made it impossible to actually enter the place.

And if I truly decided to go crashing in, I'd only have one chance to do so.

I climbed a tree and observed that place from a distance. This was because I got the feeling that someone was going to visit this place.

The simplest way to find the backer would be to find someone who'd interacted with Ma Ryung In.

Since I might be discovered, I hid in a tree and did my best to dissipate my presence whilst I simultaneously spread my senses to observe the area.

Around midnight, someone finally left the building.

It was Ma Ryung In, and there were eighteen others following behind him.

From what I could tell, those must be the eighteen experts I'd sensed in that room. So they were Ma Ryung In's guard.

He left the place in a carriage, while the other men left on horses.

Seeing that he'd left, I got the desire to enter the building and

truly wanted to know what was in that room. But, on the off chance that I couldn't get through, or if I couldn't find something, everything would've gone to waste. Thus, I suppressed that feeling.

Today's target was Ma Ryung In.

As such, I went flying after the carriage.

Chapter 87: In The Gray Area Between The Truth And The Lie (1)

The place that Ma Ryung In arrived at was the Western Spear School.

It was one of the two martial art schools that represented the Ha Nam.

The other martial art school that represented the Ha Nam was the Eastern Sword School. These two schools have been a rival school that represented the Ha Nam for countless years.

Just like when Ma Jung Soo came down to San Dong and went to the Yang Clan, Ma Ryung In was doing the same with the Western Spear School. Due to this, the Western Spear School was in a festive mood with alcohol and food.

The meeting between the two parties was held for more than an hour.

However I didn't attempt to listen in on what they were saying. I didn't find it necessary to fight my way past those eighteen experts to listen to their conversation.

Even if I got past those eighteen, there was that man from 'the Organization' that I had to go through. I was certain that he was stronger than Number Seven.

After another hour, Ma Ryung In came out of the Western Spear School.

He didn't go back to his place but went somewhere else, so I followed him this time as well. Since I kept my distance they didn't know that they were being followed.

After about half an hour the place that they arrived at was the rival school of the Western Spear School, the Eastern Sword School.

This Punk! So you want to shake things up for both sides.

This place was also bustling with food and alcohol.

I didn't know how he was able to achieve this but I knew that he must have manipulated them into it. He must have used a similar method he used with me, by telling them nine truths and one lie. He was incomparatively more skilled and experienced than Ma Jung Soo.

After he got out of the Eastern Sword School, he was headed to Jung Ju Martial Art School. Probably he was headed to where Chu Do Chi was. After an hour, he left the place.

Accompanied by Chu Do Chi he got on the carriage once again.

He was truly a busy person.

Seeing where the carriage was headed, I was surprised since they were going in the direction of the inn where I was staying at was.

So I hastened my pace got there a step before them.

A moment later someone knocked on my door.

When I opened the door, it was Ma Ryung In.

"Did I wake you?"

"No, I couldn't sleep."

Since he was very skilled I didn't want to arouse his suspicion by pretending to sleep.

"Well, it seems that I couldn't sleep today. Anyways, it seems like you have had drink or two already."

"I should have visited you earlier."

"Well, I know you are busy."

"Haha, sounds just like you." He laughed as if he was impressed by me, "Will you make me stand here?"

"Please come in."

He entered my room and scanned it. Since I didn't have anything there was nothing he could discover.

"Since you can't sleep why didn't you have a drink?"

"I don't drink by myself."

"So that how it is."

"Your name, I just remembered who you are. Are you one of the successors of the Heavenly Dao Gate?"

"Yes, I am. There are five other successors."

"You are from a famed clan..."

"But why am I stuck in a basement doing something so suspicious?"

"Yes." I nodded.

"Didn't you say that the difference between a righteous person and a unrighteous person is as thin as a single word?"

This was what I said to Chu Do Chi.

"Yes I did."

"Well, you can see it as the same, a famed clan..."

What? What are you comparing?

But he didn't finish.

"I understand but shit! I want some wine in the morning."

Then Ma Ryung In took out something from his pocket and placed it on the table. It was a banknote worth about a thousand nyang.

"If you can't sleep then go downstairs and buy some drink or even go have fun. I am sure you can sleep well in a girl's lap."

This was an interesting turn of events. This monster's tail keeps on wiggling.

With a smile, I took the banknote, "Thanks."

"What do you need to be thankful for?"

"Although I acted tough, I couldn't sleep. I killed a couple of your

men... I tried not to think about it but I kept on getting on the back of my mind. But why are you treating me so well?"

"Should I tell you why? First didn't you eat three of the Devil Spirit Pill? Well although it may be cheap compared to other cultivating medicine, it still takes a lot of ingredient and time."

"Is that the only reason?"

"Of course not. I have another reason."

"What is that?"

"Seeing you, I feel that this might be the work of fate."

"Work of fate? We are men, no need to say something like that."

"When I first saw you I got the feeling that our relationship was going to run deep. Let's just say that I took a liking in you."

If it was the thirty-year-old me, I would have fallen under his manipulation. Who wouldn't fall under his spell when he offered you a thousand nyang and praised you?

"Anyway thanks. I will put this money to a good use."

That night I didn't proceed to observe Ma Ryung In anymore.

Instead I went to the entertainment house and ordered the best food, wine, and girl.

I was joking around with her merrily. This was because I got a feeling that he was going to observe me.

Even if he didn't, I would just consider this as my day off.

Although I stayed at that place for a long time I didn't sleep over. I was just here to fool them, not to enjoy myself.

Since I had already experienced the physical relations between a man and a woman in my past life, I wasn't embarrassed at all.

"Do you have someone you have on your mind?" The girl asked me.

"No."

"You probably do."

"I don't. Don't think that you know me."

"We females have a sense for these things."

"Haha. I am someone who likes being free."

She laughed.

"Why are you laughing?"

"Just because. That's what all man who wander their whole life say. But in the end, they all say they want to settle down since having too much freedom can get boring."

"Don't be fooled. They are saying that to fool you. That's how people are."

"They may be." She smiled.

I laid on her lap looking at the moon.

In the moon I saw Song Hwa Rin's smiling face.

Then the girl asked me, "Is the girl you are thinking right now the one you love?"

"I am thinking about you."

She laughed and looked at the moon.

"The moon is very beautiful today."

"What are you thinking about Miss?" Soo Ran asked.

"Just about him."

"What?" Soo Ran was surprised, "Could you be thinking about Master Byuk?"

"What? I can't think about him?"

"No. But you have never thought about h..."

"Yes, I have never thought about him before."

"Yes, but do you have something in your mind miss?"

"No. I just answered your question about him."

Soo Ran could tell that her feelings for Byuk Lee Dan was getting stronger by the day.

"But aren't you getting closer to him?" She said this to comfort her but it was the opposite effect.

"No, he is getting further and further away from me."

Soo Ran looked at her with a confused look.

"It feels like when I take a single step, he takes three." The feeling that Song Hwa Rin was feeling was regret.

"To me, you are the best Miss."

Song Hwa Rin gave a little smile then waved at Soo Ran to come to her side.

When she came to her side, Song Hwa Rin stared at the moon again.

And Soo Ran thought, 'She definitely changed.'

The next day a mission came down.

It was a kill mission. He wanted me to kill a man named Um Haeng Bool. He was a pretty famed rapist and killer who was wreaking havoc in Ha Nam.

To track down this man people lost their lives, and there were no further words about his location till now.

"Is he your enemy?"

"No."

"Then?"

"He was someone who wasn't caught for his crimes all this time. Luckily this time we found his location."

A trap?

This was what I believed at first.

Maybe he wanted to kill me in this mission and cover it up as an incident? But why? He could use many other methods to eliminate me.

"You must capture him so we can hand him over to the Alliance."

"So he even has a price on his head?"

"Yes."

"And the reward?"

"You can take it."

Showing that I didn't understand I blinked my eyes two times. But it seems like he was already expecting my response.

"What are you scheming?"

"What do you mean what are we scheming? We are trying to catch someone evil."

"Bullshit! Who are you trying to fool?"

"Watch your mouth."

"Fine, why are you trying to kill him?"

"Didn't I tell you? Because he is someone evil."

"And you aren't one?"

Chu Do Chi laughed and said, "I don't understand why Lord Ma is treating you so well."

So it seems like the one who ordered this was Ma Ryung In.

"Fine. I'll catch him. I guess I'll take out my rage on him."

I did as I was told since I needed to find out more.

Two days later I entered one of the Alliance Office building in Jung Ju.

The person that I was dragging into the office was a man named Um Haeng Bool. I dragged him into the office as he was all bloody and half dead since half of his bones were broken.

"I have someone who has a price on his head."

One of the officials asked with a surprise, "Who is he?"

"His name is Um Haeng Bool."

Everyone seemed surprised at what I said since he was a pretty famed killer in Ha Nam.

"He is still alive so you can verify that it is him easier."

The whole office was in disarray.

The City Lord even came after receiving the report.

"What is your honorable name sir?"

"The people in Kang Ho call me the Nameless Warrior."

"Oh! So it's you Lord Nameless Warrior!"

All the other officials rose from their chair and started clapping for me.

It seems that even amongst the people in the Alliance my reputation for killing Yeom Hwa and denouncing the Heavenly Dao Gate was pretty good.

Now that I even captured Um Haeng Bool they were really praising me.

By the time I got the reward money, people from the whole city were lining up to see my face.

Just a few days ago I was surrounded by enemies. Now I am surrounded by these people as a hero.

That day I became the hero of Jung Ju.

The reward for capturing Um Haeng Bool was seven thousand nyang. This showed how much evil he did.

Taking care of an evil person, getting rewarded, this mission wasn't a trap.

But the real question remained.

Why was Ma Ryung In treating me like this?

Chapter 88: In The Gray Area Between The Truth And The Lie (2)

The next day the stories about the 'Nameless Warrior' swept across the Central Plain. This was like adding oil to the flame that was already sweeping across the Central Plain.

If killing the Decimator was meant to be his challenge against the powerful, then capturing Eom Hang Bool meant that he was fighting for the people. Especially for the women who were the victims of Eom Hang Bool.

Although everyone was happy there were some who were cautious since they didn't know what sort of political this would bring.

Aside from those few with the capture of Eom Hang Bool they were happy that another hero was born.

Even when I was eating at the restaurant everyone was talking about me. No the other me as 'Lord Nameless Warrior'.

"If I was able to see his face even once I wouldn't have any regrets."

"After the previous mengju passed away I was afraid that the Kang Ho didn't have any more heroes, but now it seems someone has finally taken up that mantle."

"Since the last place he was at was Jung Joo, he must still be here right?" Then he started staring around the restaurant.

His eyes met mine but he turned his head back to his friends. I must be thinking can I really meet the hero this easily, but I am that person that you want to meet.

I was surprised that the news would travel this fast.

Creating a news and spreading it was not an easy task. It required a lot of people and time. But this time this news was spreading on its own like a wildfire.

When I was still the mengju I saw Kang Ho through the eyes and ears of Kal Sa Ryang. But seeing it personally, Kang Ho was different than I thought. It was livelier than I thought.

Another thing that I realized was Kang Ho was desperately wishing for a hero. I was thankful that these people are remembering me as the previous hero but still a bit bitter that they were blaming me for creating peace for too long.

Then someone sat down at my table without my permission. When I looked up it was Ma Ryung In.

"How does it feel? Being a hero?"

It seems that he left his guards outside and came in alone.

"I don't know. I don't know why they are making such a fuss about me killing one person. They know that I got the reward from the Alliance."

"So what if they know. They believe that you will use it for good cause."

"That's laughable."

"They say to become a hero you need to ride the time well. Even if you kill the same person but you didn't ride the timing then no one will recognize you."

"That's true."

"Anyway congratulation. We need to celebrate. Since you don't drink on your own I will drink with you."

We called one of the waiter and order wine and snack.

"I am thankful I made some money. But why are you treating me so well?"

"It's a gift."

"A gift?"

"It a gift to my new friend. Why are you making such an expression?"

"Can I be truthful?"

"Go ahead."

"I think you are planning on something for me. Since it is strange for someone of your status to treat someone like me like this."

"You really have no trust."

"In my long road, aside from myself, I didn't have anyone that I could trust."

"Then why don't you trust me?"

He raised a glass to me, but I drank without receiving it.

When Ma Ryung In exited the restaurant he got in a carriage that was arranged for him.

The person who was waiting for him inside was Chu Do Chi.

Right as Ma Ryung In entered the coach he said, "Give him something big. Do you have one that you can think of?"

"We might."

"Good bigger the better. Something he could make a lot of money off of."

"Yes, sir."

Unable to hold back his curiosity Chu Do Chi asked, "Pardon me for asking but why are you treating him so well?"

"Are you curious?"

"Yes, it is to the point where I can't sleep."

"Just wait. You will be able to sleep soon. Let's go."

From the second floor window I was looking down at the coach.

When the coach was about to leave Ma Ryung In took his head out and waved his hand. I waved back.

Seeing that I waved back he went back into the coach. But Chu Do Chi had on an expression 'punk! Lets see what happens.'

There was a reason for him doing this.

By doing this he knew that he would be gaining some of my trust.

Early next morning Chu Do Chi came to the inn.

He came in when I was having breakfast.

"If you didn't have breakfast why don't we eat together?"

"No, I'm fine."

"Don't they say to live long you must have a hearty breakfast."

"Do you want to live long?"

"Of course. Why else would I be hanging out with you?"

"You have another mission."

"What is it?"

After quickly stuffing my food down to lowered my chopstick.

"I still haven't been able to use the money that I got from capturing Eom Hang Bool."

"You can use it later. This time the reward is even better."

I stared at him then said, "Fine, since you are giving me work I guess I'm obliged. But why are you making me do all this work? Is it because you want to kill me and take my money?"

"Do you think we are that petty to steal from you?"

"Then why are you doing this?"

Since even Chu Do Chi didn't even know why he seemed to be angry at me.

"Here, just take this."

The piece of paper had the name, location and the habit of the villain.

To find out all of this information.

These corrupt bastards!

If you had these why don't you capture them yourself?

These organization never moved unless it benefited them.

The real villain is not the one who is in the paper but you.

My next target was an assassin named Jong Baek. He was an expert assassin who did all sort of assassination in Ha Nam.

Although Kang Ho was full of assassins the thing that set him apart from others were, for money he would assassinate even children and women who didn't even master martial arts.

At the end of the fight, he asked me who I was, "...who are you?"

"Some call me Lord Nameless Warrior."

"...how did you know where to find me?"

When I arrived, he was already hiding inside of his secret room.

But how did I know he was inside this room?

When I was still the mengju, I faced many assassination attempts on my life. Especially during the war with the Demonic Sects. They sent an assassin nearly every day, there were multiple assassination attempts on the same day as well.

So, if you wanted me to write a report about assassinations. I

would be the most knowledgeable in this aspect.

"...were you an assassin before?" These were his last words.

During our fight, his assassin instinct was probably telling him that I was seeing through all of his tricks.

This time the southern district office was flipped upside down.

The rumored 'Lord Nameless Warrior' brought back assassin Jong Baek's corpse. He even had a nine thousand nyang reward on his head.

With this most recent event my name was spread across Kang Ho once more.

That he is the enemy of those villains.

'Lord Nameless Warrior' became people's hopes and dreams.

Even if it wasn't Ma Ryung In, I am sure others would have approached me to create a hero. But since he approached me it allowed me to cut down the time in realizing my goal.

But I still did not know what Ma Ryung In's objective was. Now

the real game has started. If you put this in term of chess, he had taken the momentum, now I must take it back.

A few days later I killed two people who were trailing me. But Chu Do Chi and Ma Ryung In didn't say anything.

There were some days when someone was spying on me but now there were days where there was no one spying on me.

With this, our relationship seems to have gotten better.

Since the code led me all the way here, I was going to see it through the end even if it took some time.

I know that Kwang Du would be worried about me but I knew that everyone else would be able to function without me.

A few days later, to gather some information I entered one of Jung Ju Martial Art School.

This was one of their headquarters in Ha Nam Castle, although there were few other schools this was their main school.

This school was very big, big enough to fit at least two hundred people. Although there were some workers most of them were Chu DO Chi's subordinates.

Since Jung Ju had that secret laboratory I must set up a branch of

my intelligence sect here so that they could gather more information about this place.

Anyway, the Jung Ju martial arts school was a bit lax compared to the manor. This was the place where Chu Do Chi resided. During the days that no one was spying on me, I would come here and observe Chu Do Chi. I found a location where I could listen in on his conversation without being discovered.

Since Ma Ryung In visited this place after visiting the Western Spear School and Eastern Sword School there was a high possibility that he will come back here.

And I was right. A few days later he came to this place.

"What is our 'Lord Nameless Warrior' doing right now?"

"He is just doing what he usually does. Goes to the entertainment house plays a bit come back eat and drink."

"Find a way to get him more famous."

"May I ask you why you are doing this for him?"

"Are you that curious?"

"Yes, I must know."

"If you think I am doing this for him then you are wrong. Because I am not doing this for him."

Ma Ryung In revealed his true intent, "Do you know what is happening in few days?"

"In few day? Do you mean the Grand Festival of the Gold?"

"Yes."

The Grand Festival of the Gold was a grand festival that happened every year for a period of ten days. Everyone from the commoner to leaders of large merchant guilds to the mengju will be present. It was a grand event when everybody comes to enjoy the festive mood.

"My brother will be coming that time as well."

If he meant by his brother, then must mean his brother Ma Chul Goon.

Blinking a couple of time Chu Do Chi said with his mouth opened, "Could you mean?"

"I will send him to kill my brother."

Chu Do Chi just swallowed his saliva stunned.

"He is being called 'Lord Nameless Warrior' right now. If he kills my brother what sort of event might happen?"

Now I finally understood his true intent.

In his battle against the successors, his greatest challenge was Ma Chul Goon. His brother had great backing both inside and outside the clan. So he was most likely to become the next successor.

But what would happen if he dies?

It probably would come to him since he was the next strongest candidate.

Although he was like the other successor when he was inside the clan he was a completely different person outside the clan.

"He has great skill, and now with the added internal energy don't you think this might be a possibility?"

"But can he kill Ma Chul Goon?"

"It doesn't matter if he fails."

"What?"

"It's just the fact that he tried to kill my brother that is

important. What would people think when the hero of Kang Ho tried to kill my brother? The public might question my brother's action and some might think that he has done evil.

"Ah!"

Now Chu Do Chi understood what he wanted to do with me.

"But what if he says our name during the interrogation."

"They will try to kill me."

"What?"

"But we have 'that'."

'That' even made Chu Do Chi tremble.

It was probably the thing that he wanted to show me on the first day that I was there. So this was all part of his plan.

Ma Ryung In smiled, "So you must do your best to make our hero stronger and more glorious."

I heard everything that they said.

So that is their plan huh?

I knew he was going to do something. I expect that he was going to use me as an experiment but this was the reason?

But this? I have even thought about it.

And I also needed to know what 'that' was.

Now that I have gained the upper hand I smiled.

Good, I will take up your challenge.

Chapter 89: In The Gray Area Between The Truth And The Lie (3)

When Chu Do Chi arrived the next day, I asked him without hesitation, "I need some money."

"What's this about?"

"Now that I think about it, I feel like I'm taking care of the crap that you're giving me."

"This punk!" However, despite his response, his stare was different than before. He knew what my purpose was, and was treating me differently.

"Since things have come to this, I want to become a proper hero."

"And what does that have to do with you needing money?"

"Why wouldn't it involve money? I need to get a good sword and some decent clothing. And to do that, I need money. Looking back, I think that I wasted that money going to that entertainment house."

"It sounds to me like you want to do your part to serve lord Ma. So, how much do you need?"

"Give me twenty thousand nyang."

"What?!" He frowned.

"Are you crazy? Do you think that we can simply toss out twenty thousand nyang?"

"No, but I know you can. That's why I asked you. Go tell Lord Ma for me."

He left the restaurant with an angry expression. I laughed as he left.

I knew what they were planning to do with me, so I was going to play with them a bit.

Sure, I'll become your hero. However, you'll have to heavily invest in me.

Since this had to do with the successor's seat, Ma Ryung In wouldn't refuse easily.

There were currently twenty days until the Grand Festival of Gold.

I had until then to find out what was inside that room, what sort of experiments they were doing, and how they were creating the Devil's Spirit Pill of No Regret.

I need to find out these things so that I can set up countermeasures against them.

"That crazy bastard's demanded twenty thousand nyang." Chu Do Chi said in an angry tone.

"Give it to him."

"...What?"

At first, he thought that he'd misheard.

"I said, give him the money."

Chu Do Chi exclaimed, "You mustn't!"

Even though they might need him, investing twenty thousand nyang into him was too much.

"That's too much money. You should, at most, only give him a couple thousand nyang."

Ma RYung In smiled and said, "Isn't this the first time you've dealt with someone like this?"

"What do you mean sir?"

"Someone that's about to become a sacrifice getting their worth before they're sent off."

Ma Ryun In believed this to be a test of fate; a test he needed to pass in order to become the next mengju. His sacrifice would be that he'd pay the offering himself. It was worth it to invest at least this much.

"But twenty thousand is still too much!"

Chu Do Chi was against it. It didn't matter how much they had, this was still too much to invest in a sacrifice.

This was something that he, a loyal subordinate, didn't even welcome.

He was angry about it. No, it would be more appropriate to say that he was greedy.

"The more that we invest in him, the more that we should use him. Trust me on this."

Chu Do Chi decided that he wouldn't reject it anymore.

He sighed deeply, then said, "Yes."

The next day, Chu Do Chi returned with the twenty thousand nyang I'd asked for.

I'd expected them to cut the amount in half, but they'd given me the full amount.

That Ma Ryung In was quite difficult to understand.

Combined with the reward I'd received, I now had a total of thirty six thousand nyang. I'd been able to gather quite a large sum of money in a short amount of time.

But there was one thing I was dissatisfied with, which was that the money was traceable. All of the money I'd received—from both the Alliance and Ma Ryun In—could only be used by the Nameless Warrior, not by Byuk Lee Dan. With this in mind, I planned to use it without hesitation.

As such, I rushed towards the Shrouded City Merchant. Since this was a big city, the Shrouded City was also quite large.

The person that greeted me was a middle-aged man. "I heard that you've come here to buy some cultivation medicine."

"Yes. Do you have any?"

"I'm afraid not. It seems that someone has been buying it all up. It's difficult to acquire any right now."

I knew times were difficult, but for someone to be buying up all the cultivation medicine.... He must be monopolizing the cultivation medicine to use himself, or be using it for experiments.

If Ma Ryung In is the tail, then the hand and the foot must be the ones buying all the medicine.

"There are other things here that're just as good as the medicine you're looking for. Would you like to look around?"

"Sure."

Since I planned to spend all the money I'd received, I decided that I'd follow him and buy some weapons.

This place was definitely bigger than the one in San Dong.

"There are great swords here, are you not interested in them?"

"Swords are too expensive."

"True, swords can get pretty expensive."

I looked around, but nothing caught my attention. Thus, I asked

him, "Where do you sell armor?"

He showed me some armor.

Bulkier armor cost around nine thousand nyang, while armor that was smaller and more concealable cost around fifteen thousand nyang.

"Fifteen thousand nyang? Isn't that a bit much?"

"Isn't your life worth that much?"

I looked around again, then something caught my eye. There was a fishing rod leaning against the wall.

"What's that?"

"It's the fishing rod that was used by the Fisherman of the East."

The Fisherman of the East was a person who was pretty close to me. He'd stood by my side and aided me in my fight against the Demon Alliance.

"Are you selling it?"

"Would we put it here if we weren't selling it? However, there's something I must tell you."

"What?"

"Unfortunately, the line has snapped. Originally, it would've been worth fifty thousand nyang, but now, it's only worth ten thousand nyang."

I nodded and stared at the rod.

"If you want it, we could sell it to you for seven thousand nyang."

Considering that it had been used by the Fisherman of the East, it was too cheap of a price. However, because it didn't have the string, it was practically useless, as the Fisherman of the East had used the string to execute his techniques.

"Good, I'll buy it for seven thousand."

"Wise choice."

He was extremely happy that he'd finally been able to sell the fishing rod that he hadn't been able to sell for a long time.

I bought another pair of items afterwards as well. They were the best bracer on display.

"They was used by the previous Fight King Kwang Yoong, and are called the Dragon Scale Wristguards. They're extremely light and

durable."

I'd heard about them long ago. They could easily withstand an ordinary attack. Even though they might not be able to withstand the attack of King Shura, they could still withstand an attack from the Heavenly Origin Sword. Of course, that was without the addition of Sword-ki.

"How much are they?"

"Each wristguard is two thousand nyang. So, four thousand nyang total."

"Good. I'll buy them."

"Wise choice." It seems that the owner was happy to sell these items that had remained unsold for quite a while.

But I was even happier, as they held a secret that no one else knew.

When I got back to the inn, I closed both the door and the window.

Afterwards, I went straight to work.

First I took out the fish rod. Using my internal energy, I tugged on the handle of the rod. The handle, which had originally looked

quite sturdy, instantly came apart. Afterwards, a new fishing string fell out. I knew that it would be there because I'd personally seen him put it in the rod.

I unraveled the string then attached it to the rod. With a new string, it had been reborn into its former glory. This was the entire reason that I'd bought the fishing rod for.

"Hahaha..." I was extremely satisfied with it.

And now that I had the Dragon Scale Wristguards, I had a perfect item for my White Crane Art. If I hid them under my robe, nobody would even know that I had them on.

After obtaining these results that I'd wanted I walked over to the window and looked out.

All I had to do now was find out what was in that basement.

If I could enter while Ma Ryung In and his eighteen guard entourage were away, would I be able to find out?

Finding the manor and going down wouldn't be a problem. The problem lay in the pulleys and the corridor.

There were four pulley mechanisms, thus there's a high chance that I'd be discovered.

And it seems like they'd been created by a master craftsman, so it wouldn't be easy to force my way through either.

If I couldn't trespass, what could I do?

Jung Ju was busy preparing for the Grand Festival of the Gold.

Stages were set up at various places. During the ten days that the festival took place, there were all sorts of performances, events, a black market, and more.

As I was overlooking one of the stages being built, someone said to me, "That's where the mengju will make his speech."

When I turned around, I saw that it was Ma Ryung In with his eighteen guards. It was as I'd expected; they were all experts on the same level as Sim Hwang.

"Why did you say the murim term mengju? You should've said father."

"I must respect his title."

"Is it that you don't talk to each other much?"

He didn't seem to want to continue talking about this, and changed the subject, "You look good."

"Well, the money that you gave me was a pretty large amount. Thank you for the twenty thousand nyang. Even though I asked for it, I didn't expect that you'd give it to me so easily. Now I see you in a different light."

Ma Ryung In gave a little smile, "Now that you know how I feel, I must give you my thanks. But where are you going to use that money?"

"I don't know yet. I don't even know if I'll live past a year."

He reassured me, "You will."

He said it so confidently that it didn't even sound like a lie. If I hadn't known the truth beforehand, even I would've been fooled by his lies.

He had truly been born with the ability to fool people.

"Do you know about the Grand Festival of gold?"

"I've heard about it before."

"It's something that people from all over the Kang Ho come to take part in."

"It sounds like a grand sight."

It would take place in fifteen days, and Ma Bong Gi would stand on-stage to give his speech. Thinking about this put me in a sour mood, since I'd never done something like that despite giving my life to fight for the Alliance.

"I have a question. Do you mind if I ask you?"

"Pray tell."

"What's in the room?"

"Are you curious?"

"Of course I am. And I also want to know what ingredients you're gathering. Are you doing something illegal in there?"

He lightly smiled.

"And who's the man that didn't allow me to enter that room?"

His face became a bit serious. One could instantly tell that the relationship between the two wasn't the best.

"Why do you ask?"

"I just wanted to ask if he was your superior or subordinate. I've never seen someone act that way."

His frown deepened and he said, "You don't need to see what's in the room. There will be many things to see here."

To get what you want you have to know when to take a step back as well. Especially against someone that's extremely smart or prideful. If you try to push things, they'll only get stronger. Thus, it's better to take a step back and let them show an opening.

I chose the indirect method of attacking his pride.

"I thought about our meeting again from the beginning. Although it might sound a bit weird, I think our meeting was fated. I'll see you around later."

I said farewell and turned around.

Now that I'd touched his pride, I just needed to wait. He'd come out in a certain way.

Hey look, you aren't the only one who know how to manipulate people. In fact, you're like a child in front of me, who's manipulated multiple people at once.

I'll do anything to get that door to open.

